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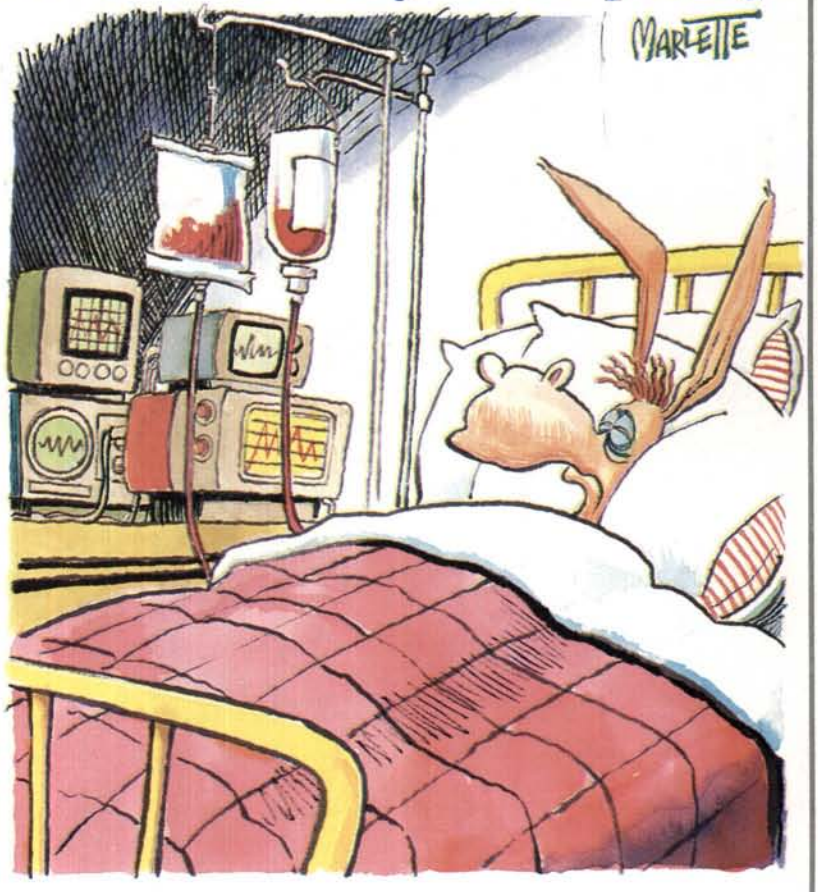
SPECIAL ISSUE

Michael Kinsley: 'p.c.' hysteria • Robert Alter: anti-Semitism's roots

The DEMOCRATIC COMA

Diagnoses and cures for a very sick party



Morton Kondracke **on the not-very-hopeful field of hopefuls •** ***Fred Barnes*** **on the fat, complacent, incumbent congressional party •** ***Sidney Blumenthal*** **on the party's strategic brain death •** ***Jacob Weisberg*** **on the feuding factions •** ***Mickey Kaus*** **on phony facts and real ones •** ***Christopher Matthews*** **on the Mommy party vs. the Daddy party •** ***The Editors*** **on the Democrats and the big bad world out there**

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CORRESPONDENCE

Kurds of prey

To the editors:

I heartily agree with your mentioning the 1933 Iraqi massacre of Assyrian Christians as an important early clue to the future course of that unhappy country ("Dances with Wolf," April 22).

But you are not quite right when you say that "the Assyrians simply disappeared." The dwindling thousands of Assyrians in the Middle East today still cling to a precarious survival. Probably fewer than 50,000 remain scattered from the plains of Eastern Syria to the suburbs of Tehran. The so-called Chaldean Christians (of whom several hundred thousand remain) are Uniate Assyrians who have accepted the authority of the pope.

In light of the unfolding Kurdish tragedy, it is ironic to point out that the greatest massacre of Assyrians in this century was not by the Iraqis in 1933, but occurred at the end of the First World War when the Ottoman Turkish government used its troops as well as units of eager Kurdish irregulars to attack thousands of fleeing Assyrian men, women, and children as they left what is now the Turkish-Iraqi border region for the relative safety of Iran. The Assyrian "nation," which had thrown in its lot with the British during the Great War, never fully recovered.

The snow-capped peaks where weary Kurds now suffer are the same mountains where, some seventy years ago, they preyed on a minority community even weaker and more defenseless than their own.

ALBERTO M. FERNANDEZ
Burke, Virginia

Alternative news

To the editors:

Thank you, Martin Peretz (Cambridge Diarist, "Blacklisted," April 15), for revealing the behind-the-scenes story as to why I never feel satisfied with the local NPR radio stations in their Middle East news and political analysis. I look regularly to "alternative" stations for well-rounded news. As the Iraq/Kuwait situation developed I began tuning in to "KPLO" (a.k.a. KPFA listener-sponsored radio in Berkeley) just to see how far they would go to drag Israel into blame for this conflict. I was never disappointed. However, what was extremely disappointing was turning the dial to the two other public radio stations in my area (KQED and KALW) and not finding a significantly less distorted view. You have shed light on why I so rarely heard over the air such succinct presentations as those I read in THE NEW REPUBLIC.

Not only will I not give a dime to listener-sponsored prejudice, but I am now doubly inspired to encourage others less finely tuned to listen more closely before reaching into their wallets.

JULES MARION
San Francisco, California

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To the editors:

"Still, the hostile witnesses [before McCarthy era congressional committees] were not hostile because they were zealots for the First Amendment. They were hostile because they were zealots for communism, and communism didn't put high value on freedom of speech," writes Martin Peretz. I was a blacklisted Hollywood Communist at the time. Can Mr. Peretz not consider that one was enthusiastic for both communism *and* the First Amendment? I cannot speak for all the comrades.

But I can testify that many Communists, perhaps at first for tactical reasons of self-preservation but gradually out of the experience of fighting for their own and others' constitutional rights, became dedicated defenders of the Bill of Rights—for all. All through the '50s informal coalitions of Communists, their archenemy Trotskyists, and all sorts of maverick men and women banded together, sometimes against incredible pressures (not least from cold war liberals), to put the case for anyone, I repeat anyone, caught in the anti-radical purge.

CLANCY SIGAL
Havenhurst, Louisiana

To the editors:

Martin Peretz is entirely correct regarding the "bias of the public media." There is a larger issue here that he could have dealt with—should even one penny of "the people's tax dollars" be spent for public media (voluntary contributions don't bother me)? How would TNR feel if

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LEO ALMAN
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

To the editors:

Not being a regular PBS watcher or NPR listener myself, I really hadn't noticed the two networks' chilling conspiracy to censor your editor in chief and chairman during the Gulf war. But many thanks anyway to TNR for bravely opening its ages to this poor fellow.

STEPHEN G. DAVIS
New York, New York

Times a-changed

To the editors:

This may not be the most earth-shattering mistake ever to appear in TNR, but there is an interesting error in Russell Banks's review of the Robert Johnson recent reissue collection ("The Devil and Robert Johnson," April 29). Mr. Banks says that Robert Johnson had never been reissued before 1969. In fact, Mr. Johnson had been reissued much earlier than that—in 1962.

This is of more than antiquarian concern because of the tremendous impact Mr. Johnson had on any number of 1960s musicians. You can find easy evidence for that just by picking up a copy of Bob Dylan's *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965). On the cover Mr. Dylan is seated on a couch and next to him is a stack of albums, one of which is a copy of Robert Johnson's *King of the Delta Blues Singers.*

GLENN WALLACH
New Haven, Connecticut
(Via 900 number)

Wine, women, and MTV

To the editors:

With his uncritical consumption of *The Doors* ("Music Makers and Shakers," April 1), I would like to welcome Stanley Kauffmann to the MTV era. Jim Morrison's life (accurately documented in *No One Here Gets Out Alive* by Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugarman) had more dimensions than sex, booze, and music. He had a fascination with power, which is not surprising for the son of an authoritarian military father. Mr. Morrison eventually found himself in a position that few, if any, Americans have ever experienced. He was able to stand before thousands of seething, angry fans and manipulate them like a sorcerer—even inciting them to riot as he did at one concert. Eventually he became bored with this power, which led him to be disgusted with his fans, to the point that he offered to ex-

continued on page 50

"ALAN EHRENHALT HAS WRITTEN A BRILLIANT BOOK— ONE OF THE MOST ORIGINAL ANALYSES OF AMERICAN POLITICS IN YEARS."
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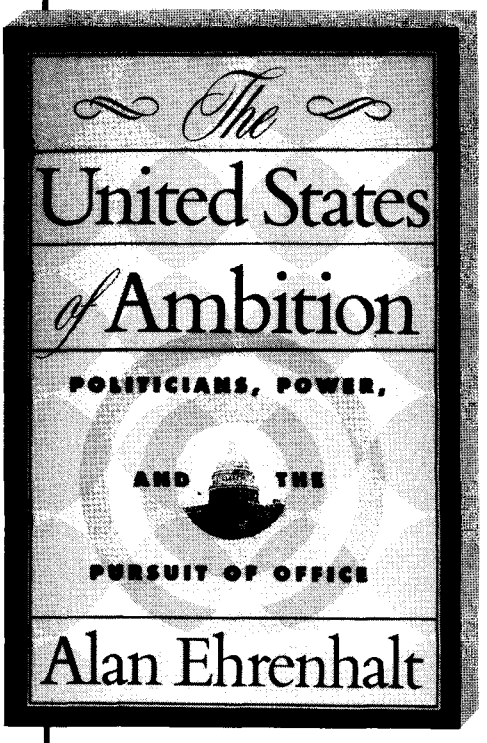

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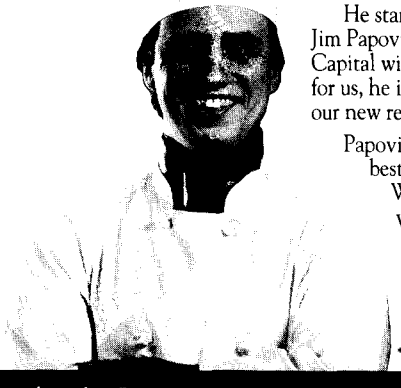

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A Kurd family on the Turkish border. April 7, 1991
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FROM WASHINGTON

P.C. B.S.

It's been years, I suspect, since the term "politically correct" has been used without sarcasm. And I beg leave to doubt that anyone *ever* has accused anyone else of being "politically *in*correct" with a straight face. The present ubiquity of these terms is a brilliant propaganda victory by *critics* of the alleged regime of left-wing intolerance at America's universities. *The Wall Street Journal* claims that "we are far worse off now as regards the threat to intellectual freedom, the pressures to conform ideologically, than during the McCarthy era."

Flaw No. 1 in this theory is that it's evident, even from afar, that conservative activism is thriving on campus. In my day, twenty years ago, you could spend four years at a major university without running into anyone who admitted to being so much as a liberal Republican. Now there are conservative newspapers, student groups, faculty caucuses, all busily claiming suppression.

No doubt the zeitgeist at universities is still to the left of the zeitgeist in American society as a whole. And no doubt there are idiots, some with tenure, saying idiotic things. But that's not the accusation. The accusation is that dissent is being stifled in order to enforce an "orthodoxy."

In 1951 William F. Buckley Jr. published his first book, *God and Man at Yale* (Regnery), making a similar complaint that universities were indoctrinating their students with left-wing propaganda. But Buckley at least was honest. His book—subtitled *The Superstitions of "Academic Freedom"*—was an *attack* on the notion of the university as a neutral forum where ideas do battle. Buckley's sermon was that Yale *should* impose an orthodoxy on its students—a conservative orthodoxy of capitalism and Christianity. In short, political correctness, conservative-style.

By contrast Dinesh D'Souza, the would-be Buckley of 1991, calls his book *Illiberal Education* (Free Press), and styles himself the defender of tolerance, openness, academic freedom, and so on. In earlier phases of his young life, at Dartmouth and Princeton, D'Souza was a right-wing killer not known for his love of toleration and respect for the other guy's point of view. But Dinesh does not brake for ironies.

Unlike Buckley's, D'Souza's book is not a sustained argument but rather an any-weapon-to-hand collection of slightly suspect anecdotes. Example. To support his peculiar assertion that racism is less prevalent at universities in the South, he reports that white fraternities at the University of Mississippi raised money to help "repair" a black fraternity whose "house was vandalized," as he puts it. In fact, the black fraternity house was completely destroyed by arson, an episode that apparently has no bearing on the question of race relations.

After wading through much of the anecdotage of PC hysteria, my own conclusion is that very little of it supports the charge that anyone's right of free expression is being stifled, let alone that there is a reign of terror on campus. The stories break down roughly into two categories.

One category consists of Buckley-like objections to a *lack* of orthodoxy. Stanford may have been right or wrong to drop its "Western culture" requirement, but surely it is those who want the requirement restored who deserve the accusation (if it is an accusation) of demanding "correctness." Stanford students may still take all the courses they want about dead white males. The question is whether they should be forced to.

Many anti-PC diatribes are just lists of things the writer finds objectionable and would like—in the spirit of toleration and free inquiry—to expunge from the college curricula. "Academic Marxists deny the autonomy of culture," intones George Will in *Newsweek*. Of course anyone sensible denies the autonomy of culture. Will's example of a transparent Marxist absurdity—"Shakespeare's *Tempest* reflects the imperialist rape of the Third World"—will not strike everyone as a worthless way to look at the play. And the notion that all political interpretation of Shakespeare is invalid—because it offends against "the autonomy of culture"—is surely more philistine than any theory academic Marxists have cooked up. Nevertheless, I would not have a fit if George Will was hired to teach English full-time at Duke. In fact, I would encourage it.

A second category of "PC" complaints involves people who are "accused" of or "ran into trouble" for making some remark that offends someone's "ethnic, racial, religious [or] political sensitivity." The quoted phrases come from Representative Henry Hyde, Republican of Illi-

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MAY 20, 1991

POWERLESS ANGELS

Surely the most tiresome theme in contemporary American politics, the soap opera of which all the parties are weary, is the one called "The Democrats and Foreign Policy." For most of two decades the attempt has been made to alter a certain overwhelming tendency of the Democratic Party in foreign affairs, and for most of two decades the attempt has failed. Now, in the wake of Operation Desert Storm and the congressional debate that preceded it, we sense the old polemical energies gaining again, the stirring of another "fight for the soul of the party." But we say, at least with respect to foreign affairs, give it up. The fight is a losing, or a lost, one. The Democratic Party, at least as it is represented by its platforms in the recent general elections, and by the majority of its senators and representatives, has a foreign policy with which it appears to be politically and intellectually satisfied. The party should stand or fall by it.

It is too simple to dismiss the Democratic attitude in foreign affairs as "isolationist." In some (but not all) areas of the world where human rights are brazenly and systematically violated, South Africa most notably, the Democrats are happy interventionists. And isolationism still flourishes more consistently on the right than on the left; it is more of a creed among the America Firsters than among the Blame America Firsters. No, the Democrats, too, are interventionists; but they are selective and peculiar ones. Their interventionism has two salient features: it prefers ideals to interests, and it prefers political action to military action.

The relationship between ideals and interests in foreign policy is never simple. It is always sweet when they coincide, and there will always be found apologists for a particular policy who insist that they coincide; but the problem is that often they do not. That is, the defense of interests often demands actions that come into contradiction with certain values. Not every such contradiction renders the prosecution of a national interest or a national ideal indefensible; but in the aftermath of Vietnam, where the contradiction between American actions and American values really became too great to bear, the Democrats seem no longer willing to bear any contradiction at all.

This has had a paradoxical consequence. It has led to a love of policies that are lofty but feckless, to an overestimation of symbols and words as instruments of diplomacy, to a kind of exalted impotence. Our cause abroad must always be just, the reasoning runs. Fine. But then the justice of ends is reduced to the justice of means. Actions that result in human misery, it is argued, cannot be defended as actions that relieve human misery, as if all misery is the same (say, the misery of a punished or repulsed aggressor and the misery of the people against which it aggressed), as if every exercise of force is like every other exercise of force.

Concretely, this has put the Democrats in the odd position of being sincerely against a variety of evils but no less sincerely against the action required to cripple or to reverse them. They seem to enjoy being powerless angels. In Nicaragua they were against the dictatorship of the Sandinistas, but also against the only instrument of pressure (it now seems fair to say) that would force the Sandinistas to a popular test of their support. (It also seems fair to say that many of those who favored that military instrument were hostile to the diplomatic maneuvers that ended up complementing the military ones.) In Grenada the Democrats acknowledged that the New Jewel regime was one of contemporary Marxism's coarser bits of paste, but were prepared to leave it in place. In Panama they scorned Noriega, and then scorned the manner in which he was removed from power, as if there were a more delicate way that this sort of gentleman may be budged. And, most climactically, there was the crisis in the Gulf. The Democrats yielded to nobody in their disgust with Saddam, but

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insisted, in the face of everything they knew about him, that force was not required to expel him from Kuwait.

To be sure, there were exceptions. There has been a minoritarian strain of Democratic opinion, an intermittent heterodoxy, that has not shrunk from the prospect of military action in all the situations listed above. And to be sure, the case for some of those military interventions may not be as convincing as the case for others. Military action is not always the most prudent or the most ethical course; but *sometimes* it is. And the ends do not always justify the means; but *sometimes* they do. It is the Democratic majority, not its critics, who are responsible for the impression that prevails in the American electorate that the Democrats are consistently, as a matter of principle, skittish about the use of American force.

It is important that the principled quality of the Democratic position be recognized. If the Democrats were wrong about the war in the Gulf, as we believe they were, it was not because the outcome of the war was more or less satisfactory. (In fact, the outcome looks less satisfactory every day, in the north, in the south, and in the capital of Iraq; the Bush administration is vitiating its own victory.) The Democrats are not to be challenged for being on the losing side; there are times when the losing side is the right side. They are to be challenged, rather, for their reasons for being on the losing side. They are not cowards, or hypocrites, or innocents; nor can their attitudes in matters of foreign policy and national security be imputed solely to their almost total lack of presidential experience since 1968, to the adversarial habits that are acquired by a congressional party that seems permanently to be in opposition. The Democrats have a set of beliefs, and those beliefs incline them toward certain policies and away from others. Their foreign policy has historical and philosophical premises. Those premises may be—we think, must be—disputed. But they cannot be condescendingly dismissed, and the Democrats will not likely be talked out of them.

Now the campaign of 1992 is finally starting up, and already ironies abound. There is the irony, for example, that many of the Democrats who pride themselves on their respect for the suffering and the sovereignty of other nations, who attribute vaguely neoimperialist motives to the interventions of the Reagan and Bush years, are about to revive xenophobia in American politics under the banner of "economic nationalism," which is frequently just a form of economic jingoism. And there is the irony that the only Democratic candidate who may acquit himself decently in the contest with Bush will be a Democrat who is not "vulnerable on the war." (We don't mean to be coy: right now the likeliest such candidate is Al Gore.) But some of those non-conformist Democrats are still being cut by the party leadership for breaking ranks last January. The war in the Gulf, in other words, has made into marble the old saw that the Democrats will never give the nomination to anybody who could win the election.

Of course, the Democrats can always console themselves with the thought that most Americans don't care much about life beyond our borders anyway; that the identity of the party in domestic policy is not as troubling to many Americans as its identity in foreign policy; that presidents are not elected, and perhaps they should not be elected, largely on foreign policy grounds. Moreover, there will continue to be those in the party who will try to persuade it to modify or to trash some of its dogmas. We will continue to support them; but we must confess, after a close look at Democratic conduct during the recent crisis, to a loss of heart. The light bulb, as the joke says, has to want to change. The Democratic Party, however, seems largely at peace with its view of the world. But the history of this country matters more than the history of this party.

NOTEBOOK

P.C. Q.: Michael Kinsley argues this week that in the controversy over "political correctness," the critics of PC have grossly exaggerated the threat to freedom of speech and inquiry posed by PC's proponents. Do you agree? Which is a bigger threat (or at least the bigger annoyance), the new orthodoxy of "sensitivity," "multiculturalism," etc., or the willingness to permit expressions even of bigotry on campus in the name of freedom of speech? You're invited to register your view on our Sound Off line, 1-900-726-6671. . . . An overwhelming majority of callers—some 95 percent—agreed with us two weeks ago that President Bush should publicly support the independence of Tibet.

MYSTERY STORY: Unsurprisingly, former President Carter has added his voice to those calling for a congressional inquiry into the "October Surprise." (See "Octoberfuss," TNR, May 13.) We agree that this is a good idea but repeat that any hearings should be a bipartisan effort to get at the truth, not a politically motivated effort to embarrass President Bush, let alone to prove that Mr. Carter was robbed of a victory. An election can't be stolen unless it's within stealing distance; and even if the hostages had come home before election day, voters had so many reasons for wishing to be rid of Mr. Carter that the electoral result would likely have been the same. In any event, the truth of the matter may be nothing more complicated than that the Iranians, having used the hostages to squeeze all the concessions they could out of the Carter administration, simply decided to hedge their bets by waiting to release them until after the election; and having waited that long, they may then have decided to wait until inauguration day, the better to curry favor with the new administration. Based on the evidence available, there's no way of knowing what happened. Carter partisans should restrain their glee.

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CARTER XIAOPING: Meanwhile, Mr. Carter has surfaced as the latest Beijing apologist. He visited China in mid-April and seems to have succumbed to the usual schmooze-job performed by the Chinese leadership on visiting American politicians. In a subsequent *New York Times* article that contained the usual provisos about the need for human rights in China, Mr. Carter felt obliged to add: "They [the Chinese leaders] (and leaders in other socialist countries) point out, correctly, that there is a wide range of human rights, some of which are respected in their countries and neglected in the U.S. These include the right to have a decent home, a job, and adequate health care. It is self-satisfying for us Americans to emphasize freedom of speech, the press, religion, and assembly as the only important human rights. . . ." Mr. Carter went on to implore Beijing to be "generous" in "putting the Tiananmen Square tragedy behind us." Meanwhile, he wants most-favored-nation trading status for China renewed, for reconciliation's sake. Mr. Carter has now managed the incredible feat of making George Bush look like a brave defender of freedom. Has the former president been having lunch with Henry Kissinger lately?

RACE ON CAMPUS UPDATE: The story goes roughly like this. A student worms his way into his school's bureaucracy, uncovers some facts embarrassing to the school's administration, and publishes them in a school newspaper. A hero of the First Amendment? Not exactly. When Timothy Maguire published records of LSAT scores at Georgetown University Law School, pointing out discrepancies between the scores of blacks and whites, he incurred the wrath of faculty, students, even the editorialists of *The New York Times*, and now faces the possibility of expulsion for his misdemeanors. No one claims he violated any individual's confidentiality by naming names, mind you—only that he aired a bit of dirty linen in a way that would have been welcomed if his political point had been different. So what did Mr. Maguire do wrong? Nothing but bring into focus a genuine issue for student discussion. On some campuses these days, that can be almost enough to get you thrown out.

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(*The Washington Post*, April 20; thanks to Kathryn Kavanagh Baran, Alexandria, Virginia)

POLICE ACADEMY II: In their recent arrest of a Maryland woman in her home, two suburban police officers left behind her two young children unattended. An hour later the girls' grandmother found them unharmed. When *The Washington Post* informed Art Di-Gennero, spokesman for the Prince George's County Sheriff's Office, of the story, he stated that he was "completely and utterly shocked." He explained that the department has a policy for tending to children under 12 years old: "Usually we'll get someone from social services to look after them or try to locate a family member. If we notice a small baby needs a diaper change or something like that, we'll get a female officer in to take care of it."

AW, SHUCKS: In presenting TNR with this year's National Magazine Award for General Excellence, at an intimate little lunch for 1,500 at the Waldorf-Astoria on April 24, the judges of the American Society of Magazine Editors had this to say: "THE NEW REPUBLIC proves that a magazine doesn't have to be flashy to be a powerhouse. With its weekly blend of passionate engagement, skeptical argument, and original reporting reinforced by a strong sense of values, it provokes, informs, and ultimately enlightens and enlivens the nation's great debates." We were also a finalist in the Single-Topic Issue category, for the September 3 issue—the one with the notorious photo of Saddam Hussein with his mustache clipped. Here's the judges' commendation for that one: "THE NEW REPUBLIC's 'Furor in the Gulf' issue came out just two weeks after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait—offering a remarkably enduring overview of Saddam's fateful move, rich in detail and perspective, and exactly when the reader needed it most." ●

Communists? No, consultants.

REVOLVING BOORS

By Douglas A. Rediker

BUDAPEST

Imagine the following: You are in the prime of your life and at the peak of your political power. Your party is firmly in control of your branch of government. You get quoted in the paper and appear on television regularly and your role in policy matters is expanding. Your political career is going splendidly and your future is bright.

But then, what was unthinkable only months earlier actually comes to pass. The voters toss your party out of office in disgrace. Your political career is stymied and you're out of a job. But you still have plenty of friends

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in the bureaucracy. So you rent an office, get yourself a fax machine, and start selling your access and experience to those in the private sector willing to pay your price.

No, this isn't just another day in Washington, D.C. It's the new face of democracy in Eastern Europe. Today, a little more than a year since the first round of democratic elections in Hungary in a lifetime, Budapest is filled with former officials of the Communist regime trying to cash in on their old contacts and influence by ushering foreign investors, banks, and businesses through and around the hoops and hurdles that constitute the maze of doing business in Hungary.

Suddenly everybody's a "consultant." They're management consultants or business consultants or investment consultants or banking consultants or political consultants. According to one former official, "While there are many types of consultants and consulting firms in Hungary today, they all do the same thing. If a company doesn't have a lot of basic capital, or it isn't sure just what it wants to do, it is called a consulting firm." (Interestingly, a Hungarian friend tells me that "consulting" in Hungary is also a popular euphemism for illicit affairs, as in, "Would you like to come by my office tonight at around seven to do some consulting?")

István Tömpe, former deputy finance minister and now chairman of Japan's Daiwa investment and consulting operation in Hungary, puts it this way: "Part of my job is to play the role of door opener. Even though I left the government, I still have many good contacts with those of my generation who are both in and out of the government, in banks and with state companies. I try to rely on them to help me do my best to inform the Japanese about potential business opportunities, deals, and changes in the laws." More succinctly, perhaps, according to Viktor Polgar, former spokesperson for the Hungarian Socialist Party and now (while continuing to hold a post at the Foreign Ministry) a partner in a consulting and investment company called Bethesda Budapest Properties, "[We provide] whatever it takes to make a deal happen. We are experts in dealing with businesses and officials. What helps is to know the system. We know how government departments work."

To find the best selection of intermediaries, the place to start is the lobby of the Budapest Forum Hotel. As international investors began to arrive last year, activity around the bar and lobby at the Forum picked up dramatically. It was here that many former Communist government officials first began to surface as jungle guides, to help the newcomers through unfamiliar terrain, and it remains the place where more deals are created and consummated than anywhere else in town.

For most foreign investors, finding the right guide has become almost a necessity. As one American businessman told me, "Doing business in Hungary is more a courtship than anything else, and by having someone who really knows who's who and the lay of the land acting as your Cyrano, you've got a hell of a lot better chance of scoring than if you do it on your own." Or put another way, as a German investment banker told me, "The streets of Hungary are covered in money. The trick is to hire the right consultant to convince the government to let you pick it up."

But you had better hurry, before all the choicest prospects get snatched up. Many of the "best" officials from old Communist administrations, for example, have already been signed to exclusive contracts with major international financial teams. Ex-Finance and Deputy Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy is now working with the French bank Paribas, while former Finance Ministers Tömpe, Zsigmond Járai, and István Farkas are now working with Daiwa, Britain's James Capel, and Hungary's own Reviconsult, respectively. Járai is joined at Capel by a former administrative secretary of state in the Ministry of Industry and Trade, Henrich Auth, while former Deputy Minister of Industry Peter Reiniger has been snatched by Italian financier Carlo De-Benedetti's investment and consulting firm, Cohfin. The former chairman of the Hungarian Central Bank, János Fekete, is now affiliated with Israel's Bank Leumi, and Pal Ivanyi, former secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and mayor of Budapest, is now a consultant to Boma, a Dutch consulting and trading company.

But the top pick of this year's draft (and my nominee for the "If My Friends Could See Me Now" Award) was a former Communist prime minister, Miklos Németh, who has been signed by the London-based European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the multinational bank created to try to help Eastern European countries recover from the economic disaster caused by former Communist administrations.

Of course, most of these former officials didn't enter the private sector sweepstakes of their own choosing. As Tömpe explained: "Since 1987 we have had four different governments: the Kádár government, the Grosz government, the Németh government, and now the Antall government. And each government wanted a new team. And this one is the worst because they had a policy that whoever held a [Communist] Party card could not be considered for a top post." An understandable position because, as noted by one Hungarian consultant, "It is very difficult for any government to pick out who is a political nut, and who is an expert."

Although Hungary's season of financial transition is in its very early stages, the performances of some consultants have already demonstrated true pro potential. Tömpe's Daiwa has been awarded the management of the privatization of the mammoth Salgótarján Plate Glass Factory, and James Capel, with Járai and Auth on the team, has secured the management of the privatizations of Hungarian electronics giant Videoton and the hotel chain Danubius, the former in conjunction with old ministry colleague Farkas's Reviconsult.

And whether they qualify as experts or nuts, their ties to the old Communist regimes don't seem to be a con-

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cern. Former Party ideology boss János Barabás told me that in his business he uses "both old and new contacts. If I give a call to the new ministries, my personal experience is that my relationship with the new and old officials is quite good. I don't feel that my past is disturbing to anyone."

Hungary in 1991 also offers a unique opportunity for consultants and their clients, one that would make the mouths of Washington lobbyists water. As a brochure for GJW/Politconsult boasts, consulting services "are even more relevant in an environment where rules and procedures usually taken for granted are absent or are still being created." Read: The laws are still being written, so if you want to help write them, now is the time to buy a place at the table. And we can show you how.

So listen up, investors. The fun has just begun. There are loads of state-owned companies just waiting to be privatized, while laws on privatization and restitution, telecommunications, banking, and land ownership are still winding their way through the Hungarian political process. And there's still plenty of influence waiting around to be purchased. According to unofficial figures, between two and three hundred ministers, state secretaries, deputy ministers, and division chiefs left the government since 1987. That's some revolving door.

DOUGLAS A. REDIKER, a former Washington lawyer, now lives in Budapest.

The other Palm Beach scandal.

KENNEDY KENNEL

By David Greenberg

Accusations of rape against William Kennedy Smith, nephew of Senator Edward Kennedy, have once again embroiled the Kennedy family in scandal. From the beginning of the controversy a series of issues has been seized upon by the press, from the ethics of revealing the name of an alleged rape victim to the aesthetics of a portly, middle-aged man prancing around in nothing but an Oxford shirt. But amid the hullabaloo, the press has missed one of the real scandals of this whole affair: the ownership of the Kennedy mansion where the rape allegedly took place.

Evidence suggests that the estate may be owned by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation, a tax-exempt organization devoted to helping the mentally retarded. If so, the Kennedy Foundation, as well as the members of the Kennedy family who use the house, may be in violation of federal law. It is illegal for private foundations to permit their officers to use foundation assets for non-charitable purposes. And whatever was going on in the Kennedy mansion the night of March 30, it doesn't appear to have been for charitable purposes.

Joseph Kennedy Sr. and Rose Kennedy established the foundation in 1946 in memory of their firstborn son, who was killed in World War II. The foundation's main area of concern is mental retardation, a special interest of the elder Kennedys because their daughter Rosemary is retarded. The foundation funds research on Down's syndrome, conducts studies on questions of medical ethics and retardation, sponsors events to raise public awareness about the issue, and lobbies for legislation to help the retarded. The best known of its accomplishments is the creation of the Special Olympics, which has grown into an independent and self-supporting institution.

The precise ownership of the house is a tangled affair. It was originally purchased by Joseph Kennedy in 1933 for $120,000. Since that time the house has served as a vacation home first for Joseph and Rose's family, and more recently for the younger Kennedy generation. When the patriarch died in 1969, according to newspaper accounts at the time, he bequeathed $500,000 to Rose, $25,000 to each of his two sisters, and the rest of his wealth and property—including, presumably, the Palm Beach house—to the foundation. But Brian Dunn, a spokesman for the Kennedy Foundation, denies that the foundation owns the actual house; he told me that the foundation owns only "a vacant parcel of land just north of the Kennedy residence," separated from the residence by a "high wall." Rose Kennedy's name is on the deed to the house, but this fact is in itself inconclusive: Rose could own it herself, or she could own it as a nominee of the foundation. Robert Davidoff, a Palm Beach photographer close to the Kennedy family, told a *New York Times* reporter that the foundation owns the house and confirmed to me separately that this was well known.

But perhaps the most telling evidence pointing to the foundation's custody of the estate was revealed in a *Boston Globe* article of April 23. As every tabloid reader knows by now, the police waited for two weeks before searching the Kennedy estate, potentially allowing evidence that should have been gathered immediately to be lost. According to the *Globe*, the reason for the delay was that police could not search the estate until the foundation's trustees gave them permission to do so. One of the reporters who worked on the *Globe* piece said that this entailed obtaining signatures from all of the foundation's trustees, none of whom lives in Florida. (The four trustees, according to the foundation's tax return, are the four Kennedy children—Eunice, Pat, Jean, and Ted. Joseph Hakim, the treasurer, and George Zitnay, the secretary, are the other two officers.) Craig Gunkel, public information officer for the Palm Beach police, denied to me that collecting the signatures was the reason for the delay, but confirmed

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that it was the foundation's trustees to whom the police turned to get permission to search the estate.

For the foundation to own the house and allow the family to use it would violate provisions in the Internal Revenue Code designed to prevent what is called in legalese "self-dealing." These provisions exist to keep what are known as "disqualified persons"—managers or trustees of foundations, as well as closely related individuals such as family members or business partners—from using a foundation's assets for their own personal benefit. In *The Law of Tax Exempt Organizations*, a commonly used law text, Bruce Hopkins details what constitutes self-dealing. According to Internal Revenue Code sections 4941 (d)(1)(A) and (d)(1)(C), Hopkins writes, "leasing of property between a private foundation and a disqualified person" and "the furnishing of goods, services, or facilities between a private foundation and a disqualified person" usually constitute acts of self-dealing. Hopkins cites a ruling where "the rental of office space (to disqualified persons), [which] did not contribute importantly to a private foundation's tax-exempt purpose of conducting agricultural research and experimentation" was deemed self-dealing, even though the renters' business was related to agriculture.

Of course, if the foundation doesn't own the house, but just the property adjacent to it, there is probably no violation of tax law. (It's possible, though, that the vacant land is not primarily an investment for the foundation—which would be legal—so much as a way of improving the view from the house's porch, and thus should be taxed.) But if the foundation doesn't own the house, a question arises as to why the Kennedys have allowed the Palm Beach police to scurry around to get the trustees' signatures. In any case, the foundation's involvement has certainly proved a boon in keeping the police from compiling a strong case against William Kennedy Smith. As one Washington lawyer pointed out, "If there's one thing the Kennedys don't have, it's bad legal advice." •

The Mommy party and the Daddy party.

PARENTHOOD

By Christopher Matthews

There's an accepted division of chores in American politics today. Republicans protect us with a strong national defense; Democrats nourish us with Social Security and Medicare. Republicans worry about our business affairs; Democrats look after our health, nutrition, and welfare. Republicans control the White House; Democrats provide a warm and caring presence on Capitol Hill.

The paradigm for this snug arrangement is oddly familiar. It's the traditional American family. "Daddy" locks the doors at night and brings home the bacon. "Mommy" worries when the kids are sick and makes sure each one gets treated fairly. This neat partition of authority and duty may seem an anachronism from the "Leave it to Beaver" era, but it's an apt model for today's political household.

Look at how naturally the parties fell into their respective roles with the onset of war. "This will not stand!" the Republican president declared last summer in stern paterfamilias fashion. "At this very moment," Texas Senator Phil Gramm wrote to GOP contributors as Desert Storm swirled, "President Bush is bravely bearing burdens that would crush a lesser man." While Daddy faced burdens, Mommy had concerns. "While we are all deeply concerned about the crisis in the Gulf," DNC chair Ron Brown told party activists a week later, "I don't believe that we can be paralyzed by that concern." Democrats rarely questioned Bush's gung-ho worldview, much less advanced one of their own. After all the big decisions had been made and with a half-million troops deployed, all Mommy could do was stand at the doorway wringing her hands and wondering whether Daddy might be acting too rashly.

The Democrats' paralysis ended with the first sign of truce. With the troops heading stateside, the Mommy party suddenly found itself with a familiar role to play: it pushed through a welcome-home tray of educational, medical, child care, counseling, and family separation benefits faster than Harriet Nelson used to offer Cokes and cookies. But when it came time for the victorious commander in chief to address the relieved Congress on what needed doing back on the home front, all George Bush could think to mention was a brace of bills dealing with highways and crime—*guy* stuff.

The differences between our two political parents were showcased to dazzling effect at two partisan retreats this year. A meeting of liberal Democrats in Chantilly, Virginia, on January 26—ten days into the Persian Gulf war—focused on matters close to home: health care, employment fairness, reproductive rights. The subtext of the confab, called by Ohio Senator Howard Metzenbaum, was to resist efforts by the slightly macho Democratic Leadership Council to add "daddy" issues, like national security and economic growth, to the party agenda. A handout implored attendees not to stray beyond the water's edge but to stay fixed on domestic social worries like "national health programs." The only buzz-phrase on the agenda that touched foreign policy was the predictable call to "Cut the Military Budget."

Even when troops were mentioned, it was in the context of peace, not war. Thus, the biggest applause line of the conference was a pitch for national health insurance. "For too many of them," Ted Kennedy said of the expected Desert Storm casualties, "the first wound will be the last time in their lives that they ever receive

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adequate medical attention." Not to be outdone, Jesse Jackson instructed: "Another mark of our leadership must be that we support the troops when they are *not* troops."

A couple of months later the House GOP caucus held its annual retreat at a Merrill Lynch conference center near Princeton. The talk's concentration on big-world issues such as national security and global economic competition made the Democratic confab seem like a Tupperware party. Here, the reigning mood was Bohemian Grove hardheadedness. The favorite target: welfare mothers. "Every time I read about graft in the welfare system," Edward Luttwak cracked to chortling GOP males, "I'm happy because it means that *some* of the money is not going for counterproductive activity." The crowd cheered at George Gilder's remark: "The only thing single parents produce is crime, drugs, violence, disease, and Democrats."

More menacing to the Chantilly Democrats than the Republicans' locker-room ridicule are their recent raids into "mommy" territory. Last year Bush converted the child care bill from a piece of liberal social legislation to yet another tax cut initiative. This year, thanks to Lamar Alexander's education initiative, Bush has shifted the terrain from a Mondalesque push for fairness to a "Just wait 'til your Daddy gets home!" toughening of standards. And though the Dems love to nag about Bush "priorities," their actual legislative plan for 1991 is limited to a narrow range of social issues, like parental leave and the civil rights bill, which Democrats are now desperately selling as a woman's issue in order to deflect Bush's assault on quotas. Thanks to last fall's five-year budget deal, they can no longer make the spring budget resolution into a debate over "fairness." With few goodies in the jar, the Mommy party seems a good deal less cuddly than it used to be.

Don't underestimate the appeal of this new two-parent arrangement in American politics. By focusing on "mommy" matters, today's Democrats avoid the brutal, intraparty debate that tore at the party's soul during Vietnam. By playing down their Persian Gulf votes in the 1992 election, Democratic lawmakers hope to protect themselves from a second Bush landslide. And by playing "daddy," Republicans shift the blame for the crime and dropout statistics to the much-abused programs of the '60s. If "mommy" hadn't been so soft on welfare cheaters, the recipients would be working by now.

What do the voters get from this two-parent system of politics they seem to like so much? From "daddy" they get a well-endowed defense and a fiscal policy that never asks them to match spending with taxes. From "mommy" they get endless growth in entitlement programs with no cuts in pocket money. The composite effect of the see-who-can-spoil-'em-the-most bidding war is a family that's overdrawn its joint checking account by $2 trillion the last decade.

Voters, of course, would have it much better in the long term if the ruling duo modernized their relationship. If "daddy" started to chip in around the house, Americans might suddenly find themselves with two parties working to meet our huge home front challenges. If "mommy" started competing more feistily at the office, we might find ourselves facing foreign policy *options* when we go to vote. In place of the two-parent system, we might once again know the roar and thrust of a genuine two-party rivalry.

CHRISTOPHER MATTHEWS, author of *Hardball*, is Washington bureau chief for the *San Francisco Examiner*.

A strategy for resurrection.

FLATLINERS

By Sidney Blumenthal

Tom Foley is a soft-spoken man, renowned for his civility. He seemed the perfect successor to the abrasive Jim Wright as Speaker of the House. Foley's office is so non-confrontational it even lacks a desk. Instead it has a "conversation pit." All day long he plays soothing classical music on his elaborate stereo equipment. He is, in his emollient way, the paragon for today's establishment Democratic Party. He is prepared to do anything but persistently confront the Republican executive.

In March of this year, even as depression swept over the Democrats in the wake of the Gulf war, many battle-scarred veterans of campaigns past had a sense that, in spite of his heroic aura, President Bush was oddly vulnerable. What was needed, some muttered among themselves in corners, was a concerted effort by Congress to foster conflict, to test the president on issue after issue, to show that he is not really the strong leader he has appeared to be. It was at this indecisive moment that Tom Foley mounted the platform to fill the vacuum, delivering a speech that aroused the stormiest applause from the downcast Democrats. Like nobody else, he found an issue that moved them on a deep emotional level. Uncharacteristically, he was rancorous and even vengeful, pouring out his wrath on those who truly angered him. No, not the Republicans: the consultants who have helped elect Democrats to office and were lending credence to the notion that the party was in trouble. Foley's concept of leadership was the stifling of self-criticism. The members of the DNC

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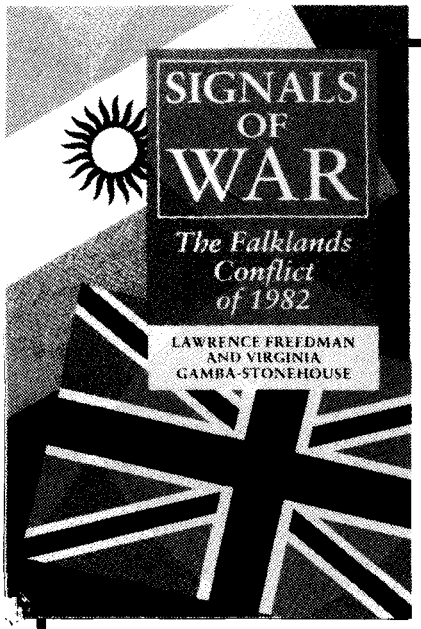
also did not want to hear the terrible news. They cheered the loss of nerve.

For more than a decade the Democrats have been trapped in a reactive psychological syndrome. In 1979 the congressional party virtually drafted Senator Edward Kennedy to run against the incumbent Democratic president. The bill of particulars against Jimmy Carter was composed mostly of small annoyances: a lack of petty courtesies, cutting pork barrel here and there, offenses committed against interest groups, his moralism, his diffuse agenda. What turned dislike into contempt was his political weakness. Carter, however, was not so weak against Kennedy. It took Reagan to strike him down: an anti-Washington candidate who succeeded an anti-Washington president.

The traumatic effect of 1980 was more than doubled by the loss of the Senate—the defeat of a whole generation of leadership that had arisen in the Kennedy era. Those spared were stricken dumb with awe by the mystical powers of Reagan's popularity. In 1981 the Democratic-dominated House voted for his economic program, which established the reign of insolvency that has paralyzed the Democrats' ability to act meaningfully ever since. They had been outfoxed by budget director David Stockman's insidious strategy of deliberate deficit-ridden government. In 1984 Walter Mondale ran as the ideal expression of the entrenched operational party. Unlike Carter, he cast himself as an old Washington hand who would serve as the experienced broker among the interest groups. But Gary Hart, running as newness against antiquity, nearly overthrew Mondale in the primaries. And Reagan easily overwhelmed Mondale in the fall.

When Reagan fell into the Iran-contra scandal, the congressional committee botched the investigation, fearful of discovering that another Republican president had committed impeachable offenses. A repeatedly defeated congressional party was afraid of the political warfare that would ensue. So in setting up the investigation they stripped themselves of many of their own powers. The press, they convinced themselves, would do their political work for them. But the bravura performance of Oliver North, who flailed them with symbolic patriotic images as they sat passively, was like a rehearsal for the 1988 campaign.

At the close of the Democratic convention in Atlanta, Michael Dukakis was seventeen points ahead. The party felt vindicated, as if the recapture of the Senate in 1986 had augured the return to the White House. Dukakis's lead appeared to promise that his theme—competence over ideology—would be borne out. The Democrats didn't have to challenge the Republicans with convictions after all. When Dan Quayle was nominated, they held back again: let the press do it. The defeat in 1988 was more bitter than any in twenty years. McGovern's and Mondale's losses were foretold, and Carter's was no great surprise, but every seasoned professional within the party believed that Dukakis could have won. The



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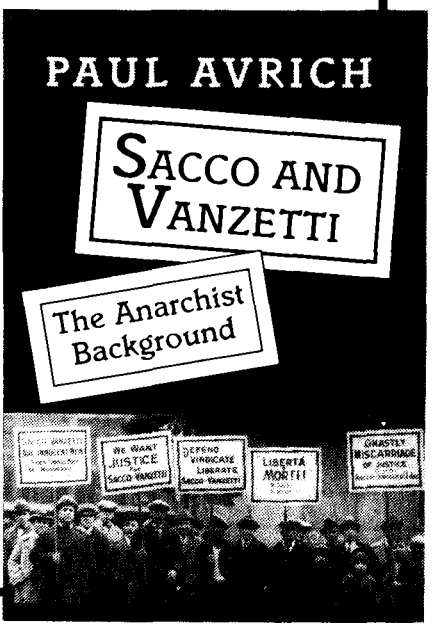

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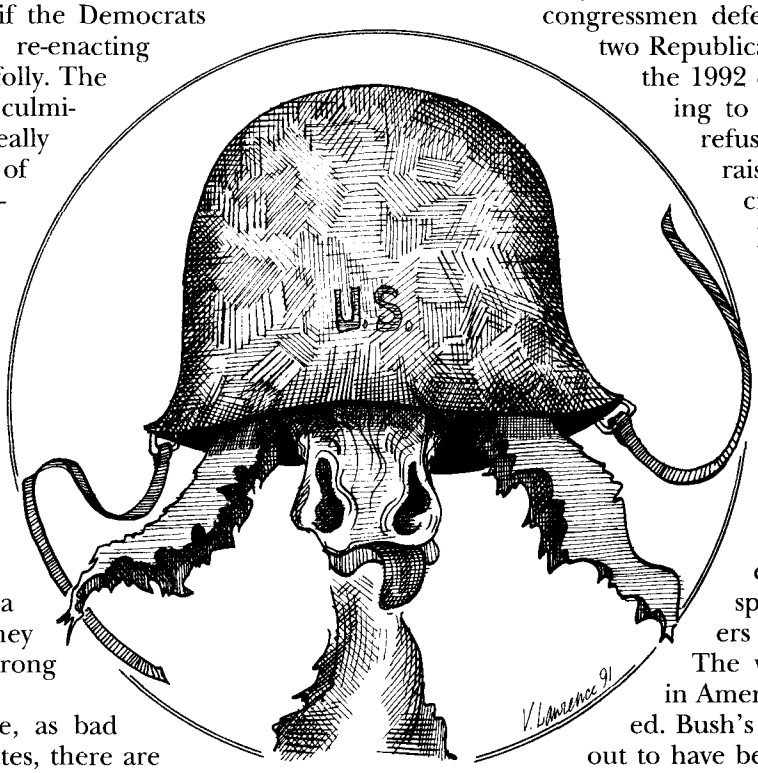
congressional Democrats consoled themselves with the thought that Bush had had no coattails and would be forced to bargain with them. They would be comfortable.

They were wrong again. Jim Wright was driven from the speakership amid charges of self-dealing—another shock. Foley was a calming elixir for jangled nerves. But with Bush pushed into a corner on the budget, reneging on his campaign promise not to raise taxes, the congressional leadership proceeded to negotiate away the political advantage, cutting a compromise deal. Only the repudiation of the leadership by the members—especially the self-destructive GOP minority—made it possible to throw Bush on the defensive, creating the opening to cast him as the protector of the privileged. Then came Saddam.

Since the war it is as if the Democrats have been neurotically re-enacting their decade of strategic folly. The Dukakis campaign, the culminating fiasco, hasn't really ended. On the genocide of the Kurds, it took a clamor from the press—not from Congress—to provoke the White House to begin humanitarian aid. If one voted against Bush's war policy, according to a perverse logic, then one can't recoil in horror from the consequences of his actions. The Democrats have trapped themselves in a double bind where they can't help but do the wrong thing.



Meanwhile, back home, as bad economic news accumulates, there are few demands for Bush to propose an anti-recession program; nor have more than a handful of Democrats advanced policies of their own. Instead, the Democratic grandees, acting under the pretense of responsibility, ensured the defeat of the Moynihan plan for a Social Security tax cut, which would have exposed the administration's budgetary shell game and put the party on the side of middle-class tax relief. The Democrats' response to Bush's education plan showed that they did not grasp their own message of "fairness." The Bush proposal includes a "choice" policy, which would in effect subsidize those who can already afford private schools, and could be portrayed as an entitlement for the well-to-do, a transfer of wealth upward. But only the beleaguered Ted Kennedy, among all the Democrats, seemed to understand the underlying class angle.

For his part, the Speaker—the highest constitutionally ranking Democratic official—opposed the Moynihan proposal. At a hastily called news conference to respond to Bush's education plan, his only words were "thank you." When Sununu's exorbitant travel expenses were exposed, Foley, according to a reliable congressional source, called a meeting of the leadership, telling them he didn't want Sununu to be criticized for fear that it would render congressmen susceptible to attack for their travels on military aircraft. The main imperative is the avoidance of pain. Last year, at the height of public anger about the S&L scandal, Foley urged that members not raise it as an issue. He believed that Republicans would be more adept at exposing Democratic vulnerabilities in the scandal than Democrats would be in hurting the Republicans. Foley, however, miscalculated. Neil Bush, the president's son, became the national symbol of the scandal, and the only congressmen defeated because of it were two Republicans. Now, gearing up for the 1992 campaign, Foley, according to another reliable source, refuses to sign any fund-raising letter for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee that criticizes Bush by name. Yet his partisanship has not atrophied completely: he served as a sponsor of a recent fund-raiser for the racial demagogue, Representative Gus Savage.

With this lack of leadership, it is a silent spring. Once again the voters feel themselves adrift. The war's crystallizing power in American politics has dissipated. Bush's "defining hour" turned out to have been a spike in the public opinion charts. But if Bush is a quintessentially movable object, the Democrats are a supremely resistible force.

If the leaders of the congressional party, who refuse to act as an opposition, believe that the worst criticism they might face within the party is from disloyal consultants, they may soon be in for another shock. Their evasions, in fact, constitute an implicit theme that may be particularly useful to a presidential candidate—a theme that in different ways was used by Carter, Reagan, and Hart, all candidates who consciously contrasted themselves with the congressional Democratic Party. A future candidate could, with little difficulty, portray the congressional Democrats as coalition partners with the Republican administration. Washington-bashing need not be just White House-bashing anymore. The congressional party may have set the stage for a Democratic candidacy designed to play off its complacency. ●

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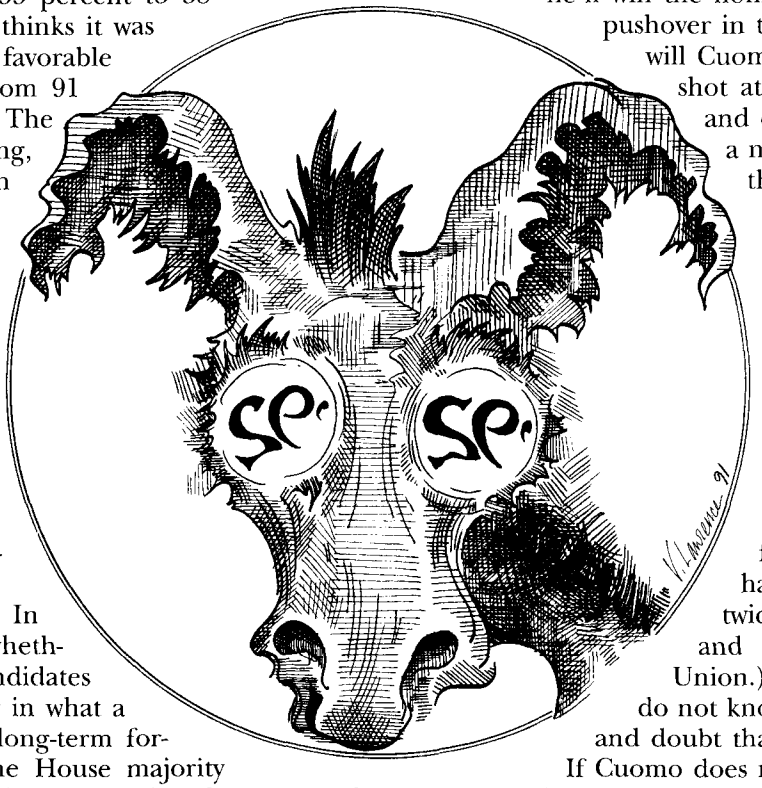
Will somebody please run for president?

GUN SHY

By Morton Kondracke

Suddenly there's a quickening of the Democratic pulse. With Saddam Hussein still in power, President Bush's war victory is tarnished. In fact, Gallup finds that by 55 percent to 38 percent, the population thinks it was no victory at all. Bush's favorable ratings have dropped from 91 percent to 76 percent. The recession is still deepening, and most Americans again think the country is on the "wrong track." What seemed hopeless for the Democrats in March seems merely a long-shot now. Mario Cuomo, Richard Gephardt, Al Gore, and Doug Wilder all say that Bush is vulnerable, and they're beginning to sound as if they believe it.



Well, half-believe it. In reaching a decision on whether to run, would-be candidates are still heavily factoring in what a loss would do to their long-term fortunes. For Gephardt, the House majority leader, it would mean giving up the virtual certainty of one day being Speaker. So aides think currently that there's a less than 50-50 chance that Gephardt will run. Like Gephardt, Gore ran in 1988 and is calculating whether another loss would destroy his chances in 1996. He seems to be leaning toward the idea that it wouldn't and, along with Wilder, toward the notion that running a good race in 1992 would help his chances four years hence. Meanwhile, Nebraska Senator Bob Kerrey and West Virginia Senator Jay Rockefeller seem to have decided to sit out 1992 in the belief that in 1996 they won't have to run against an incumbent Democratic president. Associates think that Senator Lloyd Bentsen won't run unless it looks as though the party might be without a credible nominee.

Officially, of course, former Senator Paul Tsongas has the field to himself, with 1972 nominee George McGovern, now almost in "perennial candidate" status, promising to join if Cuomo does not. Tsongas, a very long long-shot, is not being written off by Democratic pros even if he is, as the joke goes, another Greek-American liberal from Massachusetts. Tsongas has a message and a program—that America is falling behind its industrial competitors and that government should help corporations to catch up. He also has charm, a personal story of combating cancer, and "outsider" appeal that may play well in Iowa. "He'll either be Gary Hart or Bruce Babbitt," said one pro.

The big question of 1992 is Cuomo, who is widely expected to be the automatic front-runner—if he runs. "Cuomo is the 900-pound gorilla," says Nathan Landau, a major Gore supporter. "He could easily win the nomination, but he can't win the election." Political analyst William Schneider thinks that if Cuomo runs, he'll win the nomination, and won't be a pushover in the general election. But will Cuomo run? He had a better shot at the presidency in 1988 and decided not to. But he's a notorious contrarian, and the difficulty of the task this time—and the criticism likely to be heaped upon him for the condition of New York City—may make him more likely to run. He's planning a national speaking tour to denounce the Bush administration and has said he might do some foreign traveling. (He has been overseas just twice in his life, once to Italy and once to the Soviet Union.) His best friends say they do not know whether he will "go," and doubt that he knows either.

If Cuomo does run, he will have money, eloquence, labor unions (currently angry with him over New York budget cuts, but likely to come around), former Dukakis campaign manager John Sasso, and the power of old-time Democratic religion behind him. He favors higher taxes for the rich, expanded social programs for the poor, and a national health insurance program, and has no apologies whatever to make for favoring economic sanctions, rather than war, as the means for dealing with Saddam Hussein.

In the primaries, Cuomo's opponents would try to raise fears that nominating "another Northeastern liberal," especially one with a weak foreign policy record, could result in a 60-40 Bush victory in November and the loss of Democratic control of the Senate and operating control of the House. This argument is made especially by supporters of Gore, including Landau and former Democratic Party executive director Mark Siegel, who say it's a widespread belief on Capitol Hill.

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Gore and Wilder supporters expect that Cuomo, as front-runner, would be vulnerable in Iowa and New Hampshire the way Walter Mondale was in 1984.

Gore and Wilder would paint Cuomo, much as Gary Hart painted Mondale, as an old-ideas insider, and themselves as breaths of fresh air. The same tack would be taken by Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, if he runs. Wilder, by far the most active of the non-candidates, has sent scouts to both Iowa and New Hampshire, who report that Cuomo's popularity there is low. Consultant Joe Trippi, who went to Iowa for Wilder, says that Gephardt probably would carry the state's February 17 caucuses if he ran, but that otherwise the state is wide open for cultivation. Other pols report that liberal Senator Tom Harkin is considering a favorite-son candidacy (and possibly a full-scale run), in which case the race in Iowa would be for second place.

In 1988 Gore passed up Iowa, disparaging its influence on the nominating process, and made only a token bid in New Hampshire, saving his money and energy for the Southern primaries on Super Tuesday. He won five primaries but had little oomph beyond that. This year, if he runs, various Democratic pros say his challenge is to move beyond a regional appeal—perhaps by tackling potentially hostile voters in Iowa and New Hampshire on February 25. Gore backers, including his likely campaign manager, Carter Eskew, say he could accomplish the same purpose by waiting until March 3, when a mini-Super Tuesday will take place, with primaries and caucuses in Colorado, Maryland, Washington, Minnesota, and perhaps (depending on pending decisions) Utah, Idaho, New Mexico, and South Dakota. Saturday caucuses occur in Nevada, Arizona, Wyoming, and South Carolina on March 7, and Super Tuesday follows on March 10 with primaries in at least thirteen states, including Florida, Massachusetts, and Texas. Democratic efforts to move delegate-rich California up to March 3—which could help a well-financed, well-known candidate like Cuomo or Gore win the nomination early—have been blocked by Republicans.

Gore says he hasn't decided whether to run and has no deadline for decision, although friends think that when he finishes the book he is writing—reportedly on the environment and mankind's future—he will probably decide to run. He told me Bush is "likely to be quite vulnerable" because "he does not seem to have any interest in or passion for issues like the economy, health care, and the environment, only foreign policy," whereas the public's attention has shifted to domestic concerns.

Gore critics say he has some work to do, too, because for the last two years he has focused almost exclusively on the environment, whereas jobs, middle-class incomes, education, and global competition are the issues most compelling to the Democratic rank and file. Gore says he will soon propose an economic package likely to include a capital gains tax cut tied to the length of time that an investment is held. It will be to Gore's advantage in the general election that he, alone among Democratic presidential prospects, supported the war in the Persian Gulf. But political analysts like Schneider say he will have to handle the war issue delicately in seeking the nomination because Democratic primary voters still tend to be liberal and anti-war.

Wilder, meanwhile, will try to paint Gore, because he's a senator, as a Washington insider. And Wilder will paint himself as the ultimate fresh face and, as his exploratory committee manager, Paul Goldman, puts it, "the leading challenger of conventional wisdom in the Democratic Party." Wilder's novelty lies not so much in his creative thinking as in his breaking of molds: he's a fiscally conservative black who's socially moderate and tough on crime. He's a novice in national and international issues, however, and is widely believed to be really running for the vice presidential nomination in 1992 and the presidential nomination in 1996.

Wilder also will be a threat to the political clout of Jesse Jackson, the Democratic runner-up in 1988. Jackson says he could win the nomination in 1992 and has already been to both Iowa and New Hampshire this year, as have Wilder, Tsongas, and McGovern. Democratic pros, however, think Jackson made a big mistake in not running for mayor of Washington, D.C., where he could have shown a willingness to grapple with governmental management. Schneider thinks Jackson would win more black votes than Wilder, but that Wilder might win sufficient support from whites to become the "rainbow" candidate Jackson has always claimed to be. It might be an interesting election after all. ●

The Democratic civil war.

FAMILY FEUD

By Jacob Weisberg

When Democrats lose, they not only blame the party "establishment," they also give way to a compulsion to form cliques with three-letter acronyms. In recent years, owing to the plenitude of booted presidential elections, the acronyms have multiplied. After a second crushing by Richard Nixon in 1972, an elite, Scoop Jackson-inspired schism called the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM) organized a rebellion against the dovish McGovernite wing, which it claimed was too dominant in the Democratic National Committee (DNC). CDM had more or less petered out by the time of the second loss to Ronald Reagan in 1984 but was succeeded by the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), which opposed what it saw as an interest group-beholden party leadership. The most recent contestant in the blame game is the Coalition for Democratic Values (CDV), which sees the 1988 disaster as the work of the DLC, for dragging the party too far from its liberal base. As of this writing, there are no

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DMZ, HIV, or MTV, but after 1992 look out.

There's nothing, of course, that these acronymic factions like more than a fractious, possibly insoluble quarrel about how their leaderless, rudderless party should position itself. The most significant reformist force within the party is now the DLC. The DLC's founding members were Southern Democrats like Sam Nunn and Chuck Robb; Jesse Jackson memorably dubbed it "the Southern White Boy Caucus." The DLC originally played down the party's liberal platform positions on issues like hool prayer and abortion, and took a more conservative line on defense and fiscal issues. Though Richard Gephardt was an early member of the DLC, the candidates most strongly linked with it in 1988 were Al Gore and Bruce Babbitt. Since then the DLC has tried to shake its conservative label in order to attract broader support within the party. Its members call themselves "new Democrats" and contrast themselves with the "traditional Democrats" who keep losing elections.

This foggy image points to one of the DLC's inherent weaknesses. Thanks to its squishy rhetoric, the group has been able to expand its membership to include more than 400 elected officials nationally, and has recently opened affiliates in twenty states. But because it wants to be as inclusive as possible, it has failed to unite around a coherent set of positions. Though the ten Democrats who voted with President Bush on the Gulf war resolution were all DLC members, ten other DLC senators voted against him. The DLC faction is more hawkish than the party as a whole, but it lacks a clear stand on the war. On domestic issues the DLC emphasizes a pragmatic, what-works brand of neoliberalism. The group's idea shop, the Progressive Policy Institute, has developed an inventive neither-left-nor-right agenda for the party that includes the Moynihan Social Security tax cut, expansion of the earned income tax credit as an alternative to the minimum wage, and schemes for national service and youth apprenticeship. Unlike the congressional leadership, which is bound to organized labor, the DLC opposes protectionism, and will probably endorse the Mexican Free Trade Agreement at its annual meeting, which begins in Cleveland on May 5.

The conference will offer an early glimpse at possible Democratic candidates for 1992. Gore, Gephardt, Nunn, Bill Clinton, Doug Wilder, and Paul Tsongas are all scheduled to speak. Mario Cuomo turned down an invitation. George McGovern and Jesse Jackson weren't asked. The DLC has had a beef with Jackson since last year's conference in New Orleans, when he gave a speech titled "Delighted to be United," in which he congratulated the group for belatedly coming around to his point of view. Al From, the DLC's president, told

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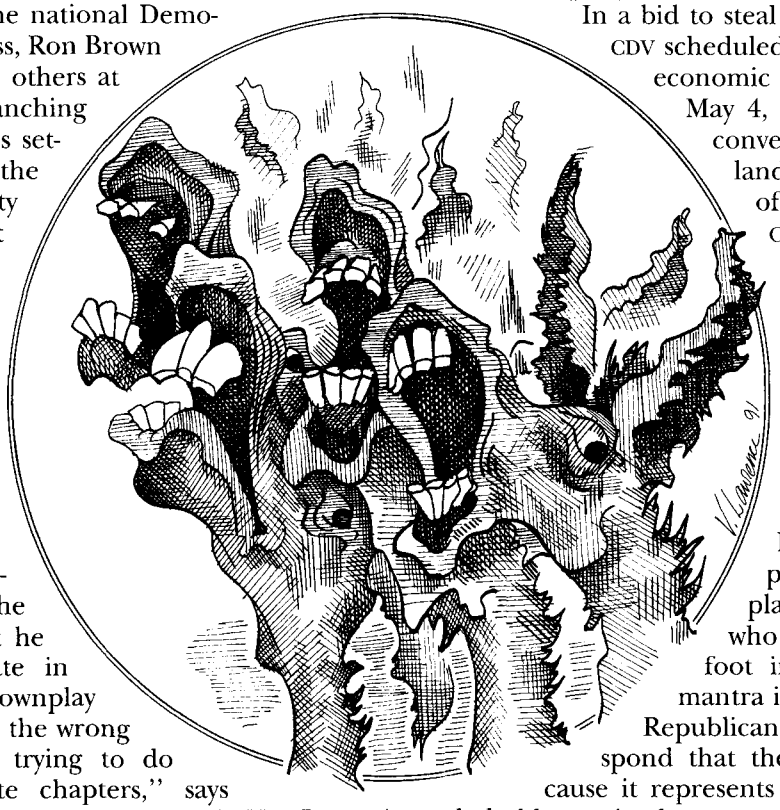
the *Chicago Sun-Times* that Jesse and George weren't invited because "we are trying to change the party, and Jackson and McGovern represent the ideological approach to government we are trying to change." The slight was swiftly returned. McGovern recently called the DLC "part of the timidity and excessive caution that has kept the Democrats from defining an alternative to the Republican approach." Jackson took matters a step further, writing to Clinton, Nunn, and Robb to ask if From spoke for them too. Their responses have not been made public.

The slugfest coincides with an escalation in the ongoing war of words between the DLC and DNC. Last week Clinton was quoted in *USA Today* as saying, "I'd like us to be what people think of when they think of the Democratic National Committee." This was a misquote; Clinton actually said "the national Democratic Party." Nonetheless, Ron Brown took it as a jab. He and others at the DNC worry that in branching out nationally, the DLC is setting itself up as a rival to the official party. Some party officials also suspect that Clinton will try to use the DLC's state committees as a vehicle for a presidential run. In an interview with *The Atlanta Constitution* last week, Brown jousted that it was too bad Clinton couldn't be the DLC's presidential candidate, "since he's already announced to the people of Arkansas that he will not be a candidate in 1992." DLC officials downplay the feud. "They may get the wrong idea about what we're trying to do when we organize state chapters," says Bruce Reed, editor of the DLC magazine *The New Democrat*. "We're not trying to take over the Democratic Party structure. We're trying to strengthen state parties with an infusion of ideas."



The DLC-DNC fight is not, however, a primarily ideological one, like the From-Jackson scrap. The DLC has no objection to the DNC so long as it remains neutral in the party's ideological battles. For his part, Brown is not especially opinionated, and since his appointment as DNC chairman in 1989 has struggled, with considerable success, to transform the DNC into an effective fund-raising and campaign-support machine. Those who have worked with Brown say he will take the party wherever it needs to go politically in order to win elections. The real ideological counterpunch to the DLC comes from outside the official party organization, where a growing chorus is clamoring that Democrats must play to their old strengths by rebuilding the Kennedy-Johnson coalition: organized labor and blacks, with a few new additions like feminists and environmentalists.

The interest groups are part of this movement. Among the most significant are the AFL-CIO, its Committee on Political Education, the National Education Association, and Americans for Democratic Action, which gives congressional Democrats an oft-cited percentage rating based on litmus-test issues. They have been joined by a number of new groups as well. The most ambitious of them is the Coalition for Democratic Values, founded last year by Ohio Senator Howard Metzenbaum, who wants it to serve as a paleoliberal counterweight to the neoliberal DLC. "We are what they are," says Heather Booth, the group's director, "an attempt to move the party—in a more progressive direction."

In a bid to steal the DLC's limelight, the CDV scheduled its own conference on economic issues in Des Moines on May 4, the day before the DLC convention begins in Cleveland. On hand will be many of those who spoke at the CDV's founding meeting in January: northern liberal senators like Ted Kennedy, Paul Simon, Chris Dodd, and Paul Wellstone, and populists Tom Harkin of Iowa, Jim Hightower of Texas, and Illinois Representative Lane Evans. The only potential candidate who plans to attend is Wilder, who stands, as usual, with a foot in every camp. Booth's mantra is: "We do not need two Republican parties." DLC types respond that the CDV is redundant because it represents the tired ideas that already hold sway in the party.

Aligned with CDV are other Democratic traditionalists who have given themselves bright, futurish names in an effort to obscure their fusty agendas. Democrats 2000 is a labor-supported "networking group for economically progressive elected officials," according to its executive director, Diana Peel. It shares most of CDV's membership and emphasizes the same issues: national health care, civil rights, and progressive taxation. A similar outfit is the Democratic Victory Group, an arm of pollster Vic Fingerhut, who works mostly for organized labor. Fingerhut's shtick is a simple one: "Populist economic issues are still the Democrats' strong suit," he says.

The DNC doesn't particularly appreciate these squabbles, which its staffers often describe, in a current phrase, as factions "pushing off" against each other. Brown would like to lower the noise level, cool the temperature, and put on a show of unity. But the spats

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aren't likely to go away, since they indicate genuine ideological fault lines within the party. No crisp, partisan message can emerge until a candidate capable of delivering one steps forward. "The Democratic Party is now up for grabs," says Michael McCurry, a former DNC official. "Anybody who wants it can have it." ●

A speechwriter's guide.

FACTS FOR HACKS

By Mickey Kaus

In presidential campaigns, the "message" comes first. Then speechwriters insert the facts to back it up, preferably startling facts. This process does not lend itself to scrupulous accuracy. Ronald Reagan set the modern standard here, which is lax.

Even as you read this, Democratic hacks and young idealists eager to serve the party's 1992 candidates are loading up the save-get keys on their computers with statistics from groups like the Children's Defense Fund and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Some of these facts will be right. But some will be misleading in ways that reveal deep gaps between the Democratic message and the real world. Until a few years ago, for example, Democrats routinely argued that "the average length of stay on welfare is only two years." Then David Ellwood of Harvard discovered it was 6.6 years. Could this help explain why Democratic rhetoric on welfare failed to resonate with voters?

Once the 1992 campaign is under way, popular Democratic "facts" will become unassailable matters of faith. That means the time for Democrats to get their facts—and, maybe, their message—straight is now, before the campaign begins. Even when the statistics are unrevealing clichés, stacked up like bricks in the middle paragraphs of stump speeches, they might as well be right. What the hell. In that spirit, here is a brief critical guide to the potential Democratic stat-bites of 1992:

1. *"Due to lack of funding, the Head Start preschool education program reaches only 20 percent of the eligible children in this country . . ."* Obsolete. The old rallying cry of the Children's Defense Fund was indeed that Head Start served only a fifth of poor preschool kids aged 3, 4, and 5. But funding increases have now raised the CDF number to 35 percent. And of the remaining 65 percent, some kids are in state preschool programs, some are in private programs, some are scattered in rural areas that are difficult to serve, and some wouldn't want to use Head Start. Head Start doesn't reach enough poor children, but the shortfall isn't close to 65 percent. CDF now urges more spending to improve programs (e.g., converting half-day programs to all day) rather than simply to cover "eligible" kids. "The focus on numbers isn't the issue," says CDF's Helen Blank. Now they tell us.

2. *". . . and, despite President Bush's promises, the Women Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program reaches only about half those eligible."* True, but misleading. WIC serves lower-income women who are pregnant or have children under 6. Pregnant women get priority; 70 to 85 percent of them are already receiving WIC. Also, eligibility for WIC extends way above the poverty line, to families of four with incomes of $24,000. You could easily cover all remaining *poor* mothers who wanted the program without doubling it.

3. *"A startling number of American children [are] in danger of starving. . . . One out of eight American children under the age of 12 is going hungry tonight."* Dan Rather said that. It's crap. Rather misreports a "study" by the Food Research and Action Center, a Washington organization that lobbies for government food aid. The study did not measure malnutrition, much less starvation. It purports to identify children whose families were strapped for cash to buy food at any time over the previous year (not each night). Low-income people were asked eight "key questions," some of which might draw affirmative responses from Donald Trump (e.g.: "Do your children ever say they are hungry because there is not enough food in the house?"). Those who said yes to five of the eight questions were pronounced "hungry." Those who gave even one "yes" were deemed "at risk" of hunger. The results of seven small, unrepresentative surveys then were transformed, somehow, into a national number. The surveys were conducted by local advocacy groups with an interest in getting "yes" answers (e.g., the Alabama Coalition Against Hunger). They were financed by Kraft General Foods, a major corporate beneficiary of federal food subsidies. The whole project oozes phoniness.

4. *"Average weekly earnings in America today are lower than they were in the last week that Dwight Eisenhower was president."* If this stat-bite from Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan is true, the country's really gone to hell. But it isn't true. Moynihan uses data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics for "production and nonsupervisory workers." The BLS survey is screwy, in part because it has been measuring a smaller and smaller segment of the labor force as the economy shifts to white-collar work. Figures for the entire work force, from more reliable Social Security records, show an average 30 percent gain since Ike's day.

5. *"Real, after-tax income fell for most American families in the '80s."* Nope. Like Moynihan's, this statistic (used by William Raspberry and *Time*, among others) is a bit too bad to be true. One problem comes in measuring income by "families." Families are getting smaller. A couple with one child living on $30,000 in 1990 is a lot better off financially than a family of six trying to make

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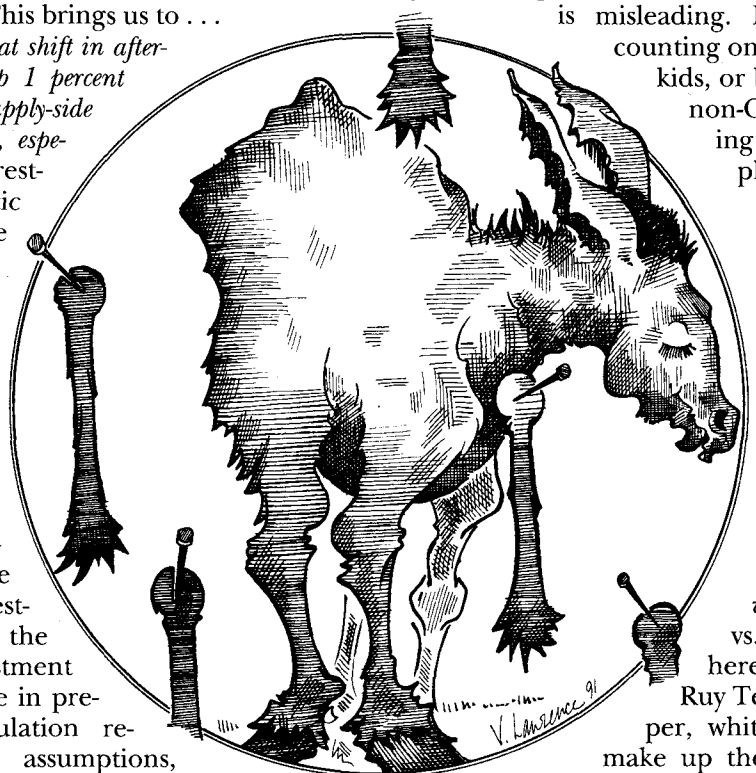
do on the same real income in 1950. When the Congressional Budget Office corrects for these shifts, the bottom 40 percent (not "most") of the population has lost ground since 1977. But significantly (for Democrats, anyway) the bulk of the damage occurred before 1980. In the much-maligned '80s, the top 70 percent of families gained, with or without the CBO adjustments. Sorry.

6. *"Since 1980 the share of after-tax household income has fallen for everyone except the richest 20 percent."* Correct. Even when most Americans gained, those in the middle didn't gain nearly as much as those at the top. *Inequality* of income has grown. This stat-bite is probably accurate even if you count government "non-cash" benefits like food stamps. It's also true that "inequality is now at the highest level since World War II." But are Republicans to blame? This brings us to . . .

7. *"[S]ome two-thirds of that shift in after-tax income toward the top 1 percent can be attributed to the supply-side tax changes of 1977 and, especially, 1981 . . ."* An interesting, but dubious, statistic from Robert S. McIntyre of Citizens for Tax Justice. Most people who've studied the subject conclude that tax cuts played only a small role in the inequality of the '80s. Changes in the underlying economy caused the rich to earn more *before* taxes. But McIntyre argues that the rich invested their tax cuts, and the earnings on that investment showed up later as a rise in pre-tax income. His calculation requires some peculiar assumptions, though. For example, he measures his "tax cuts" not from the tax code as it was in 1977 before the cuts, but from a hypothetical code he assumes would have been constantly changed to preserve progressivity. Nor is it clear the rich invested, rather than consumed, their tax windfalls. Even McIntyre concedes that inequality would still have risen without the tax changes. It's safer to stick with Kevin Phillips's fudged formulation: tax shifts "go a long way to explain" rising inequality. Who's going to argue about what a "long way" is?



8. *"Some 375,000 drug-exposed babies are born each year, 11 percent of all births."* Handle with care. The National Association for Perinatal Addiction Research and Education sent out a questionnaire to hospitals. Some had conducted detailed interviews of new mothers for drug exposure. Some hadn't. NAPARE concluded, according to a spokesperson, that 11 percent of newborns or "as many as" 375,000 babies "*may* have been affected" by drugs because their mothers took them at one point during pregnancy. "Drugs" includes alcohol as well as illegal substances. There are not 375,000 drug-*addicted* babies. There are not 375,000 cocaine-exposed babies or anywhere near 375,000 "crack babies."

9. *". . . and it's a disgrace that 3 million Americans are homeless each night."* The 3 million number was promoted by homeless advocates in the mid-'80s. Not even they bother to defend it anymore. What's the right number? Clearly higher than the 250,000 homeless the Census actually counted one day last year. A 1988 study by Martha Burt of the Urban Institute came up with 600,000 as a maximum estimate. Any number between 250,000 and 600,000 is defensible, and still a disgrace.

10. *"Fewer than 10 percent of families today fit the old 'Ozzie and Harriet' model of homemaker mother and breadwinner father."* Representative Pat Schroeder's favorite factoid is misleading. It's concocted either by counting only families with exactly two kids, or by inflating the number of non-Ozzie "families" by including seniors, roommates, couples without children, and single people living alone. If you look at only households with children, about 25 percent fit the traditional model. About 45 percent of mothers work full-time. That's still a huge shift from the 1950s.

11. *"Between now and the year 2000, most new entrants into the work force will be minorities."* A "net" vs. "gross" scam is at work here. As Lawrence Mishel and Ruy Teixeira note in a recent paper, white non-Hispanics will still make up the vast majority (66.8 percent) of people entering the work force. But because they will also be the vast majority of people *leaving* the work force, their contribution of "net"—or "new"—workers will be less than 50 percent. The work force will become a bit less white. But its majority won't be minority anytime soon, if ever.

12. *"Approximately 64 percent of all poor children—or nearly two of every three—live in families with one or more workers."* This stat-bite from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities is designed to shock voters who think the poor don't work. But it counts someone as a "worker" even if they work only a day or two a year. Unfortunately, many people don't work much more than that. Less than half of poor families with children field even a quarter-time worker. Fully 40 percent do no work at all. Only 25 percent are families where the total work effort adds up to 35 hours a week.

13. *"The popular idea of a so-called black underclass is mistaken. Blacks made up only 45 percent of all welfare recipients*

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in 1969. That percentage actually fell to 40 percent in 1987." Contrarian liberals are starting to produce numbers that dispute the notion of a black underclass. Don't buy them. Yes, blacks are about 40 percent of welfare recipients (as are whites; the Hispanic share has grown to 16 percent). But a majority of families who are on welfare for a long period of time *are* black—including 63 percent of people who got most of their income from welfare in at least eight of the ten years from 1975-84 (according to Michigan University's Panel Study of Income Dynamics). If you define the underclass as urban neighborhoods with extreme poverty, it is 68 percent black. If you define it as neighborhoods with extreme social problems, it is 58 percent black.

14. *"72 percent of black children born from 1967 through 1969 had spent at least a year on welfare by the time they reached age 18."* Another bizarre statistic promoted by Moynihan that, if accurate, would show the country to be in terrible trouble. There is a difference, though. This statistic startles not by confounding the crude, popular wisdom but by confirming it. There's another difference: the statistic is accurate. ●

The complacent congressional Dems.

HILL POTATOES

By Fred Barnes

Senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas didn't fool around with lofty idealism in recruiting congressional Democrats as active campaigners for the national Democratic ticket of 1988. He wasted no time arguing that a Democrat in the White House would get America moving or create a fairer society. Bentsen appealed to political self-centeredness. With a Democratic president, he said, Democrats in Congress would get credit for all the pork barrel they'd steered to their state or district. Instead of congressional Republicans, tipped off by a GOP administration, announcing grants and federal projects, the Democrats would. No longer, Bentsen insisted, would Republicans be able to "steal the announcement."

Bentsen knew his audience. A selfish appeal (even it didn't work very well) was the only one with a chance of wooing congressional Democrats. Now, after three clear, successive Republican victories, congressional Democrats view presidential races with dread. "Most feel a presidential race can't help them, only hurt them," says Richard Moe, a Washington attorney who's been involved in the last four Democratic campaigns. There's a reason they think this. In presidential years, their chances of losing in a Republican tide grow significantly.

Nor does the prospect of a Democratic president thrill them. Many Democrats have more clout with a Republican in the White House. If there's a Democratic administration, "policy direction shifts from a committee chairman to a Cabinet secretary or a White House aide," says Democratic Representative Robert Torricelli of New Jersey, who worked in Jimmy Carter's White House. Senior Democrats, who are full negotiating partners with a Republican president, would become mere followers with a Democrat in the White House. They know this. So electing a Democratic president is not a high priority.

It's a Faustian bargain. In exchange for control of Congress and almost certain re-election, congressional Democrats have ceded national policy-making to Republicans. Sure, Democrats have a policy role. They bargain with the White House and sometimes, as in last year's budget deal, they affect policy dramatically. But mostly they pursue the interests of the Democratic pressure groups, collect PAC money, and win reelection. They're in fat city. Most Democrats on Capitol Hill are chairmen of a committee, subcommittee, or select committee. In the Senate, there are 103 chairmanships to spread among 56 Democrats. In the House, there are 166 chairmanships for 267 Democrats. In the 1990 election, Democrats raked in 66 percent of the PAC money that went to congressional incumbents. Small wonder they're complacent.

Until the 1980s Democrats had a congressional party and a presidential party, just like Republicans. There was usually a titular head of the party, an Adlai Stevenson or a Hubert Humphrey. Now there's only a congressional party. It turns out a steady stream of clever legislative leaders, but few national leaders. Those who rise in Congress are adept at putting together a legislative agenda that can be enacted. But packaging a clear national message that dominates a presidential campaign requires a different talent. "One is the politics of compromise, the other the politics of national inspiration and leadership," says Michael McCurry, former spokesman for the Democratic National Committee.

Not only do congressional Democrats lack skill at presidential politics, they've come to resent those who do—namely Democratic political consultants who fret over the party's national image. Before a session of the DNC on March 23, House Speaker Tom Foley used a line of labor leader John L. Lewis to zing consultants who criticized congressional Democrats for their handling of the war: "It ill behooves one who has supped at labor's table and who has been sheltered in labor's house to curse with equal fervor and fine impartiality both labor and its adversaries when they become locked in a deadly embrace." Foley got a noisy ovation. Later he singled out consultants by name in addressing the House Democratic caucus.

What Democratic consultants want is hardly outlandish. They think Democrats in Congress should do ev-

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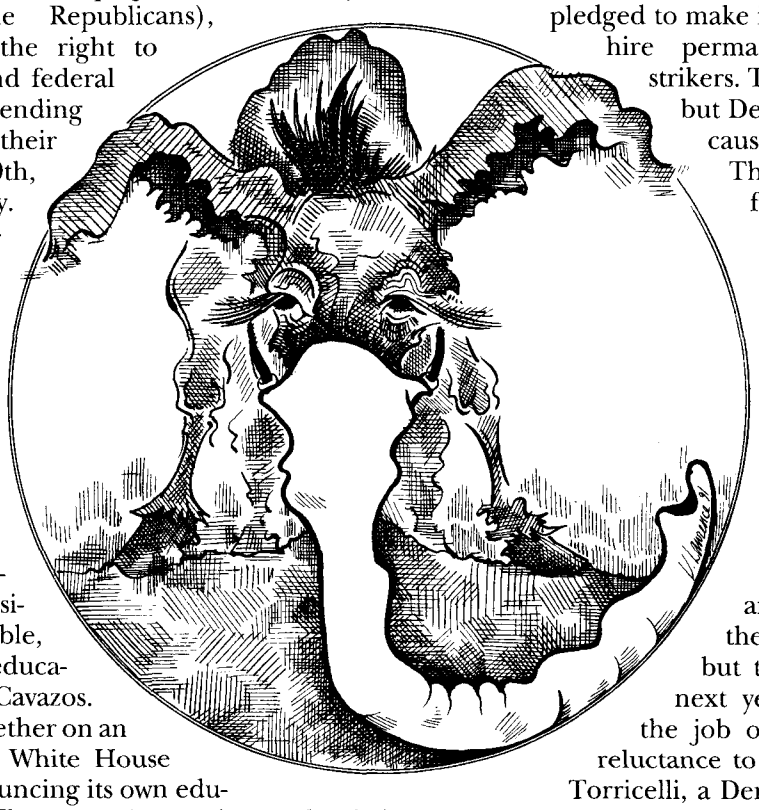
erything possible to facilitate the election of a Democratic president. The model for this is Republicans in the late 1970s. They coalesced around the enormously popular issue of tax cuts. In Congress, they forced votes. They lost but managed to differentiate the GOP from Democrats on taxes. When Ronald Reagan ran for president in 1980, he allied with Republicans on Capitol Hill, took over their tax-cutting agenda, and won. But unlike Democrats today, congressional Republicans in 1980 had everything to gain from capturing the White House. In Congress, they were an ignored minority; a Republican administration enhanced their influence. The trouble for Democrats is that they are the majority in Congress; they run the show. A Democratic president would interfere. The last one did. Carter opposed the water projects cherished by Democrats (and some Republicans), sought to deny them the right to choose U.S. attorneys and federal judges, and stopped sending congratulatory letters to their constituents on their 80th, 90th, or 100th birthday. Congressional Democrats hated him.



Democrats have done practically nothing to shape issues for 1992. Education, Social Security taxes, and health care offer fertile ground, but they haven't plowed it. For two years Democrats failed to exploit the education issue, though President Bush was vulnerable, especially with a weak education secretary, Lauro Cavazos. Democrats didn't get together on an education bill until the White House was on the verge of announcing its own education package in April. The newest innovation—school choice—had been pioneered by Democratic governors. It was embraced by Bush and his new education secretary, Lamar Alexander. But Democrats in Congress balked because liberal interest groups, especially the National Education Association, oppose choice.

Democratic leaders insist they're going to champion tax cuts for the middle class, but this may be lip service. On cutting Social Security tax rates, they're hopelessly divided and so can't exploit the White House's opposition. In the House, Majority Leader Richard Gephardt likes the idea, but Foley doesn't. In the Senate, Majority Leader George Mitchell backed the cut, but didn't apply the same leadership skill to this as he did to blocking a Bush-backed capital gains tax rate cut in 1989. A Social Security cut lost 60-38 in the Senate on April 24, with twenty-six Democrats voting against. On health care, Democratic leaders insist they'll act this year, but don't hold your breath. The issue of coping with the uninsured and holding down health costs is ripe, the potential for embarrassing Bush great. But House Democrats dawdled until Gephardt instigated talks involving the four key figures, Representatives Dan Rostenkowski, John Dingell, Pete Stark, and Henry Waxman.

The issues Democrats play up in Congress often don't help. "If you look at the congressional agenda, it reflects what the interest groups want, not what the country wants," says Will Marshall, who heads the Progressive Policy Institute, a moderate Democratic think tank. That's part of the Faustian bargain. The top legislative item is the Civil Rights Act of 1991, which stands little chance of being enacted over Bush's veto but a good chance of solidifying the party's image of favoring racial minorities over whites. Democrats are also pledged to make it illegal for companies to hire permanent replacements for strikers. This is a relic of the 1930s, but Democrats are behind it because organized labor says to. They're leaning against a free trade treaty with Mexico for the same reason.

Although these issues won't jeopardize the re-election of Democrats in Congress, they'll stereotype the party in the 1992 national election. So will the party's position on the war with Iraq. I don't think more than two or three Democrats are likely to lose because they voted against the war, but the presidential nominee next year will be saddled with the job of explaining Democratic reluctance to use military force.

Torricelli, a Democrat who voted for the war, says Democrats are gradually accepting the notion that "Congress is ours and the White House is theirs." He points to the reaction of Democrats in Congress to allegations (plus some inconclusive evidence) that the Reagan campaign had arranged for Iranians to delay the release of American hostages until after the 1980 election. "If ever there was a story that would shake the foundations of the Republican Party, that's it," he says. It would undermine the legitimacy of the Reagan and Bush presidencies. "But the story hit Capitol Hill and created barely a ripple." Torricelli tried to spur a congressional investigation. But Democratic leaders were hesitant. The best Torricelli could muster was an informal look by Democratic leaders at whether an official probe is justified. Some recalled how the Iran-contra hearings had backfired and don't want a repeat. They won't get one if there's no investigation. They won't win the White House either. ●

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A symposium.

What Is To Be Done?

THE NEW REPUBLIC asked an unscientifically selected non-cross section of (mostly) Democrats to answer the following question: "The 1992 Democratic nominee for president will obviously have his (or her) work cut out for him (or her). If you could give that nominee one piece of advice—whether on policy, strategy, or rhetoric—what would it be?" The replies:

DANIEL BELL *is scholar in residence at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences:*
The difficulty with the question is this: Is the advice to be geared to winning the election or fashioning a policy for the nation? Regrettably, the two are not wholly congruent.

An election strategy cannot be defined now: it depends on how long the recession continues; how the situation in Iraq is resolved, if at all; whether there is a new explosion in the Middle East; the apprehensions of the electorate; and much more.

The question for the nation divides in two: the definition of intractable and tractable situations. There is no "single" policy (certainly no panacea) for dealing with poverty, family disintegration, etc. And a forthright leadership has to state this, and why.

The policy focus should be on the deteriorating quality of life: the crumbling infrastructure, the urban decay, the rising health costs, the unraveling of the middle class in respect to homebuying, and the like.

The broader economic context should focus on an industrial policy investment in critical technologies and the encouragement of higher savings and investment through more focused tax policy.

These are the neglects, and perhaps an election strategy and policy emphasis can join the two.

ROBERT N. BELLAH *is the Elliott Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley:*
Since the chances for victory in 1992 are dim at best, I would advise you to throw away the "search for the center" and, for once, tell the truth. It just might work. You should tell the American people that it is time to grow up, that our adolescent individualism with its competitiveness and self-indulgence has seduced us into believing what we wanted to believe rather than what is the case: namely that our institutions have sunk into Brezhnevian stagnation and we are rapidly becoming a Third World country. The American people are not "better than their government." We have gotten exactly the government we deserved, and it has led us to the brink of disaster. It is time to examine our values and our institutions and make some fundamental changes in them so that Americans can, at last, become responsible adults, caring for our children and the world they will inhabit.

HORACE W. BUSBY *is a Washington political analyst:*
When I came to Washington in 1948 to join Representative Lyndon B. Johnson's staff, a fixed belief prevailed among senior Democrats such as Sam Rayburn and Fred Vinson. Democrats, they thought, were "just naturally" the congressional party, while Republicans were the executive party.

Rayburn was convinced that if the Republicans won the White House in 1948, they would hold it through two back-to-back two-term administrations—a total of sixteen years—by the end of which the national Democratic Party would have ceased to exist. It didn't happen. But now, forty-four years later, the fulfillment of that prophecy seems disturbingly close at hand.

The system is obsolete. It's time for Democrats (and Republicans, too) to start thinking about new ways to preserve representative government in an age of ethnic and regional breakdown.

PATRICK CADDELL, *the veteran pollster, develops projects for film and television in Los Angeles:*
What's needed is a campaign of insurgency. If the defining electoral issue remains "who is the best insider," George Bush is guaranteed re-election—and no amount of gimmicks, television spots, or money will avail. But then, a party whose message—as once summarized by Speaker Foley—is, "We share George Bush's goals, we just differ on means," will deserve the defeat it invites.

The only candidacy that can win is one that challenges not only the Republicans but also, and equally, the confederacy of officeholders, party leaders, lobbyists, and consultants who have reduced the Democratic Party to a party of complicity. Such a radical course would violently overturn the most sacred of conventional political pieties: party unity. So much the better.

A bit of history. In 1936 Franklin Roosevelt's second New Deal radically recast the position and purpose of the Democratic Party. His course also split the party. So great was the commotion that the 1928 standard bearer, Al Smith, among others, openly defected to the GOP. Yes, the party was split—and the political result was a historic landslide victory that transformed the Democratic Party into the nation's dominant and majority party for half a century.

BARBARA EHRENREICH *is the author most recently of* The Worst Years of Our Lives: Irreverent Notes from a Decade of Greed *(Pantheon):*
In a sharp break from the American electoral tradition, you should be totally, even offensively, honest. You should proclaim that it is time for America to stop taking pride in being a destroyer of nations and move on to become a builder of nations, beginning with our own. Speaking in calm, deliberate tones, and ever mindful of the morbid anxieties and resentments that the Republicans are likely to try to appeal to, you should explain that the huge tasks of human and environmental reclamation can no longer be evaded or postponed, and that, as a first step, you would restore progressive taxation and make deep cuts in military spending.

You should also, however, be honest enough to explain that it is not possible for one leader or even the entire government to accomplish what needs to be done, and that millions of people will need to become involved as citizen activists or volunteers (with those who are currently unemployed being paid, naturally, for their efforts). You should not be afraid, in other words, to tell us that citizenship is a strenuous business and that we will never be healthy, secure, and smart without a vast mobilization of grass-roots energy and imagination.

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN *is Centennial Professor of Political Science at Vanderbilt University:*
Recognize that law and order is no mere code word for racism but is, instead, a matter of death, injury, and despair for tens of thousands of our fellow citizens—especially the inner-city poor who most suffer from crime.

Curb Ron Brown and all others pushing the line that people primarily "vote their pocketbooks." Self-interest

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narrowly defined does not determine how a person votes. Voters, by contrast to all too many politicians, tend to assess the overall state of the economic well-being of the nation rather than how they think they will be personally affected by one candidate's triumph over the other.

Remember that people care about symbolic issues. There is no "mere rhetoric" in politics. Dismiss all advisers who claim otherwise; they are dangerous Iagos planted by Republicans determined to seduce you into saying and doing stupid things from which you will not recover. There are no handy criteria for separating "real" from symbolic or rhetorical issues. Issues are what actually take hold as preoccupations and themes. Voters care about tuition payments and layoffs and pensions, but they also care about the symbols that define what Americans as a people are and what they hold dear. What is at stake is not just interests but identities. Our greatest leaders have always understood this. But forget great: you're just trying to stave off a debacle.

JAMES M. FALLOWS *is Washington editor of* The Atlantic*:*
There are two obvious reforms that would, in the long run, help everyone in the country: raising the gasoline tax and equalizing funding among school districts. The gas tax is about the only tax with mainly good side effects, including its impact on environmental and trade-balance problems. As for schools, it seems insane to talk about improving education for "all children" when the children and schools that need improvement most are in the districts with the least money to spend. Unfortunately, both these issues are sure losers. So let's move on.

If a Democrat could ever really convey how America looks from the outside, he'd go a long way not only toward winning but toward being able to do something in office. From Japan or Western Europe, America as a whole looks the way Manhattan looks from the rest of America: as a place where some people are too rich, the rest are too poor, and all of them are too mean. But from outside it can be, yes, inspiring to see the things that are good about the country, especially the idea that people of different races and genders and classes should have an equal chance. America doesn't fulfill this idea; but not many societies even entertain it.

I do have one practical, sellable suggestion. College education has become more and more important for individual mobility and the overall success of our work force. It is also becoming more and more hereditary, as tuition rises faster than income. Years ago *The Washington Monthly* proposed a kind of tithing solution for college finance. Students could borrow the full cost of tuition from the federal government—and then would pay it back, over the rest of their lives, as a fixed percentage of their earnings. There are some bugs to be worked out, but it's a great concept. Everyone would have a chance, and the ones who benefit most would pay most.

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH *is writing a book, tentatively titled* The Politics of Contentment, *to be published by Houghton Mifflin:*
As to the single most necessary piece of guidance I have no doubt. It is to dispense with the political wizard—the kind of man or woman who has guided Democratic candidates in the past. The wizard's genius consists entirely in a mastery of elementary arithmetic—you seek to subtract votes from the opposition by being as much like it as possible and thus add to your own. In such fashion you sacrifice your own constituency, which, quite sensibly, does not think it worthwhile to vote. Your wizard, having been by accident on the winning side in some past election, will never be heard from again. Nor in any appreciable way will you.

I've elsewhere told of my more than ample experience with the political genius in the past. He has been behind me on a succession of campaign planes while I typed out the next speech. Over my shoulder has come the effusion of alcohol fumes and halitosis. Then has come the voice: "Professor" (said with emphasis to indicate my occupational naïveté), "really, professor, you can't say that."

"Why not? It's what our man stands for, what the country needs."

"Look, if he says that, he will alienate the people who are already most against us."

NATHAN GLAZER *is professor in the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University:*
"Rebuild America!" should be your slogan—spelled out to mean rebuilding our roads, railroads, bridges, airports, post offices, and public buildings, our water supply systems, schools, research facilities, and universities. Enough Americans have by now been to Europe and Japan to have developed the uncomfortable feeling that we are becoming in many respects a backward country, worth visiting mainly for such achievements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the Brooklyn Bridge, Grand Central Terminal, and the Empire State Building. Spell out the details, such as matching the Japanese Shinkansen, the high-speed railway from Tokyo to Osaka that opened in 1964, in our Northeast corridor by 1994, and surpassing it by 1996. Get the money from a tax on imported gasoline and a faster reduction of the arms budget.

JIM HIGHTOWER *is a populist spokesperson, author, radio commentator, and former commissioner of the Texas Department of Agriculture:*
Be an unabashed, unapologetic, ungentrified, old-time working people's Democrat, challenging head-on the Powers That Be on behalf of the Powers That *Ought* To Be.

As my Aunt Eula put it, "The water won't ever clear up 'til you get the hogs out of the creek." The hogs have been in the creek for more than a decade now, taking too much for themselves and fouling the economic and environmental waters for the great majority of Americans.

Go to these people with a program of investment in *them*—replacing "trickle-down" with "percolate-up" economics. Invest in the creativity and pride of workers; invest in the enterprise of small business, family farmers, entrepreneurs, cooperatives; invest in infrastructure and environment; in upward mobility (affordable health care, education, and housing for all); most important, invest in children.

Offer, in Franklin Roosevelt's 1932 campaign battlecry, a crusade "to restore America to its own people." Tap into their justifiable anger, but appeal to their own aspirations and altruism.

In other words, be a Democrat.

DAVID KUSNET *was a speechwriter for Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis during their presidential campaigns:*
Deep in their collective consciousness, Democrats understand what they're supposed to be: fighters for the middle class, working people, and the poor.

As recently as the last two presidential campaigns, when the nominees found themselves one punch away from being knocked out, they came out fighting as economic populists. And disappointing as the Democrats' showings were in 1984 and 1988, imagine how much worse we'd have done if Walter Mondale hadn't started speaking from the heart about jobs, Medicare, and Social Security, and Michael Dukakis hadn't finally defined the election as a battle between "Main Street" and "Easy Street."

Democrats should update—not abandon—their traditional identity as

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champions of working people against privileged elites. Economic security has new meanings in a time of technological change and worldwide competition. 1990s populism means attacking elites not only for enjoying unfair advantages but for betraying America's economic future. But Democrats shouldn't have any trouble deciding whose side they're on.

"On your side" means understanding that the less privileged people are, the more they're troubled by crime, drugs, and the sense that society has lost its moral compass. Democrats should embrace values like work, family, and playing by the rules that unite the middle class and the working poor and bridge cultural and racial gaps. By all means give a tough-on-crime speech—before an audience of building service workers concerned about getting home safely after midnight.

JACKIE MASON *is currently starring in his one-man show on Broadway,* Jackie Mason: Brand New*:*
The Democratic Party doesn't need advice—it needs an exorcism. Until the plague of guilt that controls the conscience of the Democrats is extracted, they will continue their masochistic determination to self-destruct. The obsessive iniquity of a liberal Democrat drives him into the same behavior pattern as a kamikaze pilot. The only difference is Democrats destroy themselves in three days in what is mercifully called a convention, which should really be labeled a destruction.

The amazing fact is that on the basis of issues, polls show that the majority favors the Democrats. It doesn't require a special degree in computer analysis to know that the Democrats have controlled Congress, governorships, mayoralties, and even the sheriffs and mailmen in this country for many years. But as soon as the presidential convention opens, the picture changes; in their anxiety to prove their democratic spirit, they have forgotten the demographics. Suddenly they act like being the majority is a crime. The winners seem ashamed and embarrassed, and immediately myriad losers take over the convention. If they are so easily disoriented and overwhelmed that their own convention is out of control, who would trust them to control a country?

Their behavior toward Jesse Jackson at the last convention is a perfect example. No one would have believed that Dukakis was the nominee. Anyone watching the convention would never have known that Jackson was one of five Democratic contenders vanquished by Dukakis. What next? I happen to have a big mouth too. Should I therefore become the keynote speaker at the 1992 convention?

You don't need a doctorate in politics to figure out that people vote Republican not because they prefer the Republicans, but because they're escaping the Democrats—that's why the total vote in every presidential election is so small. The majority still prefers the Democrats, but after being sickened and disgusted by their convention, it decides to vote Republican because it's the only alternative. But when those voters start the car for the voting booth, they decide it's not worth the trip and they stay home.

EUGENE J. McCARTHY *is a poet, essayist, and occasional politician:*
Do not look to the economic issues to carry you to victory. Run against George Bush, his concept of the presidency, and his presidential record. He refused to take responsibility for initiatives on taxes, appropriation, and serious budget preparation. He showed disdain for the Constitution in supporting the anti-abortion amendment. He abused the veto power, using it, in the case of the civil rights bill, to stir racial fears—as he had shown indifference to racial prejudice by allowing the Willie Horton advertisements to be run during his campaign. He promoted the military involvement in the Middle East without proper consultation with Congress, disregarded advice from military and civilian experts, and used active military officers to make a political defense of the action. And through it all he denied any personal or presidential responsibility, giving the nation its first "no-fault" presidency.

JAY McINERNEY *has just completed his fourth novel, which will be published by Knopf in 1992:*
As long as Republicans can paint Democrats as spendthrifts and soft on crime they'll keep the White House. Borrow a page from Lee Atwater, and make voters associate the names of rich crooks like Michael Milken with the current Republican dynasty—a kinder and gentler Willie Horton strategy. In other words, remind us that Republican administrations gave away the store to the rich during the '80s and get out ahead on the issue of crime, which always works well for Republicans because Democrats still seem far more interested in the rights of criminals and defendants than in the rights of victims and witnesses. At the very least, get smart and distribute your compassion more evenly. Tax cheating aside, most voters see themselves as potential crime victims rather than potential criminals. Above all, be an iconoclast. Your party still seems to be opposing Nixon; consider running against Nancy Reagan, or even George Bush.

HARRY McPHERSON *is an attorney and lobbyist in Washington, D.C.:*
The Democratic Party's song, in recent years, has been a dirge. The lyrics have dutifully celebrated America as a land of opportunity and freedom. But the melody has been different: a mournful reproach to a country gone wrong. The maldistribution of its economy; its discriminatory racial attitudes and practices; its mistreatment of women; its impetuous use of military force abroad; its tolerance of poor schools, brutal police, crowded prisons; on it goes, a list of shortcomings as long as the list of high-minded, aggrieved, or merely irritated groups that make up the modern Democratic Party. The complaints are surely not without merit. But responding to them—showing sympathy for all these grievances—has produced a dour earnestness in Democratic candidates that has turned off the voters. It isn't necessary, or even desirable, that the party's nominee be a facile booster; we need only one Republican Party. But he or she should be fundamentally up-spirited, conveying the impression of one who wishes to retain what is best about American life, and with good humor and determination to reform what cries out for it.

ANNE PERETZ *is president of The Family Center, in Somerville, Massachusetts:*
After years of getting pummeled by the Republicans on "family values," Democrats have finally learned to talk about the family. Now they need to do something about it. Our society's approach to human services is scattered, piecemeal, and oriented almost totally to individuals. We have hundreds of separate programs for drug treatment, physical and sexual abuse, infants, preschoolers, teenage mothers, and on and on. Sometimes these isolated efforts succeed—especially if the problem itself is isolated. But more often they fail, because they don't take into account the fact that many of the people served have multiple problems—and all are members of families that, however dysfunctional, are organic wholes in which every part affects every other part, positively or negatively.

Despite all the lip service to "the family," the policy approach is still the old paradigm—one problem at a time, one person at a time. Yet a child may fail at school because she's staying home to take care of younger siblings,

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because her mother is using drugs, because she feels hopeless, or because she is semi-literate. Her mother may keep her at home because she has mixed feelings about a daughter achieving where she herself failed. Her father, rebuffed by the mother, may sexually abuse the children. Is this a school problem, a drug problem, a literacy problem, a child abuse problem? Or is it something more fundamental?

To shift the focus from individuals to families is to shift the paradigm. A candidate who advocated that shift could turn the Democrats' identification as the party of "welfare" from a liability into a political asset. And a president who pushed that shift could force providers to take a systemic approach to untangling the mess, focusing on simultaneous multiple interventions with single families rather than single interventions with multiple family members.

CHARLES PETERS *is editor of* The Washington Monthly*:*
No candidate's bright ideas will be worth anything unless he can communicate a sense of the adventure and excitement involved in making this country a better place. Without that sense, our ablest people will not be attracted away from occupations that are for the most part morally and socially marginal, like lawyering, and to jobs that really count, like teaching and entrepreneuring. Programs to reform the institutions of government and revitalize the economy will not work until a lot more of our most talented citizens decide to commit themselves to public service or to creating better plants, better products, and more jobs.

The commitment to the public good that the nominee inspires must include a rejection of personal greed and of the politics of selfishness that the special interests encourage. True reform, of course, is bound to offend. Affordable health care, for example, means controlling physicians' fees, which will anger the AMA, and better schools require the firing of incompetent teachers and administrators, which will upset the NEA.

Finally, the commitment must include the element of human concern that has always been the distinguishing characteristic of the Democratic Party—a concern that embraces both the ghetto child and the Kurdish refugee, a concern that counsels solving international problems by means other than killing human beings. The nominee should take pride in, rather than be embarrassed by, the vote of congressional Democrats against going to war in the Gulf. If the Democrats had won, the hundreds of thousands who were killed in that war and its aftermath would be alive today.

RANDY SHILTS *is national correspondent for the* San Francisco Chronicle*:*
"The Republican Party—Socialism for the Rich"—that should be your campaign slogan. The GOP will accuse you of class warfare, but retort that the Republicans have waged fierce class warfare for the past twelve years—against the middle class.

Keep the message simple: the Republicans spend billions bailing out millionaire savings-and-loan presidents, but then claim there isn't enough money for student aid programs so middle-class kids can go to college. There's enough money to cut capital gains taxes for the super-rich, but not enough money to allow working Americans decent health care. Be resolute. Stand for something. Most Democrats sound like they're whining and apologizing. They're so sorry to be bothering people with things like civil rights or homelessness or AIDS. Stop apologizing. Have some backbone. If you get attacked for supporting gay civil rights, say, "Damn right I do. I'm sick of the Republicans pitting American against American." The voters will accept just about any position if it's taken with conviction and guts.

MICHAEL WALZER *is professor of social science at the Institute for Advanced Study and co-editor of* Dissent*:*
It should be clear to everyone that the Democratic Party needs a strong domestic program that both expresses and responds to the widespread sense of social breakdown and decay. Nothing is more urgent than this. And yet even the best program is likely to do little more than ensure continued control of Congress (actually no small thing, given the congressional leadership's record so far).

But the party won't lead the nation until some of its prominent activists and intellectuals are able to speak coherently about foreign policy. They are not aspiring, after all, to govern Denmark or Belgium. Like it or not, the United States plays a major role in world affairs, and most Americans want a president capable of defining that role and acting it out with energy and skill. Bush's "new world order" may be empty; it may be dangerous. But some world order there will be, and an American president must have something to say about how our values should figure in it and about how (and how far) our strength should be deployed to make it real.

BEN WATTENBERG *is senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute:*
After their political devastation in the Gulf war, many Democrats said, Let's turn the public agenda back to domestic issues. Then we'll be fine. Democrats may get their wish. There will likely be a high-profile litmus vote on a domestic issue. But it won't be fine; it will likely turn out to be yet another political disaster.

The domestic issue in question deals with a Democratic proposal to overturn recent Supreme Court decisions on hiring policy. Democrats call it a "civil rights bill." Republicans call it a "quota bill."

Advice: Democrats should do . . . nothing. The Democratic proposal is disastrous politics and worse social policy. Proportionalism is both hated and harmful. President Bush has made the Democratic proposal seem half-acceptable because his "compromise," though better, is unwise, too.

What the Court did—just imagine!—was say that businesses can't discriminate and they can hire by merit. If the Democrats do nothing, those decisions will stand, and stand us all in good stead. The Democrats should not only do nothing, they should brag about it.

SEAN WILENTZ *is professor of history at Princeton University:*
Remember that class justice is the Democratic Party's raison d'être. Be aggressive: drop the elitist rhetoric of "compassion," which condescends to working people and leaves the rest of the electorate cold. Face up, finally, to the nation's worsening social breakdown (especially in the cities), and link it to the Republicans' bad faith about "free enterprise." Design a new social compact, by rewriting some of the rules of the workplace and marketplace, shifting federal spending toward the middle and working class, and restoring some equity about who pays the freight.

Sadly, this won't come easily, given how many voters now live in privatized suburbs, where politics gets defined strictly as keeping taxes low and keeping paradise free of trouble (i.e., blacks, drugs, quick-growth developers). If things get tough, you can count on the Republicans to turn scurrilous and manipulate racial themes. So be prepared, by making common cause between the cities and the crabgrass frontier over schools, health care, child care, etc.—instead of pitting one against the other, as in the past.

FREDERICK WISEMAN *is a filmmaker living in Cambridge, Massachusetts:*
Pray.

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Degrees of Reality

One of the more astonishing feats in the history of film is the making of *Open City* (1945). Roberto Rossellini and his colleagues made this drama of the resistance to the German occupation of Rome very shortly after the German troops had left the city. In fact Rossellini began planning it in 1944 before the Germans had gone.

Much has been written about the difficulties of making the picture—the shortage of film stock and electric power, the absence of labs so that Rossellini couldn't see rushes, etc. I don't want to diminish those problems, but the point that always presses home whenever I see *Open City* is what it was like for the Romans themselves to witness, even to take part in, the re-enactment of horrors that had so lately been the harsh facts of their lives.

Memories of *Open City* kept recurring while I was watching **Requiem for Dominic** (Hemdale). It deals with the Romanian revolution of December 1989 as centered in Timisoara, and much of it was made in that city only a few months after the actual events. An Austrian filmmaker named Robert Dornhelm was born in Timisoara, where in his boyhood he had been friends with another boy named Dominic Paraschiv. In 1989 Dornhelm heard that Paraschiv had been wounded in the uprising and was imprisoned in a hospital, accused of slaughtering eighty people. This accusation didn't fit the Dominic whom Dornhelm remembered.

He went to Timisoara and investigated, an investigation carried on against considerable odds. Out of that investigation, which eventually disclosed the truth, Dornhelm has made this film and has in part used some people who were actually involved, as well as actual locations. Dornhelm himself does not appear: he created a character called Paul Weiss, played by the coauthor of the screenplay, Felix Mitterer, who fulfills the (let's call it) Dornhelm function.

For the director, the purpose of the picture was at least double. He wanted to clear his friend's name, and he wanted to show how, in the fury of an uprising against tyranny, other tyrannies can come about. (Remember Cinna the poet in *Julius Caesar*, who is attacked by an angry mob simply because he has the same name as one of the conspirators against Caesar.) To call the current situation in Romania complex is to simplify it. (The film could use some clarification about factions.) Still, the rebellion came out of a hatred of oppression, and Dornhelm shows that there were shades other than black and white.

But for me, the moral purposes of the film were less forceful than Dornhelm's daring in his use of the people of the city (besides his ingenuity in seamlessly interweaving newsreel footage). For one sequence, a mass meeting in a square, Dornhelm had 35,000 extras. Certainly those people must have had some interest in the making of the picture, but that very interest must also have made them a rather volatile crowd, so soon after the actual events. Dornhelm brought it all off well.

Nowadays it's hard to believe that some of the writers of the so-called Southern Gothic school, which flourished from about 1940 to 1960, were taken so seriously. Flannery O'Connor and Eudora Welty are too talented to be thought of as members of that school, or of any other: they are themselves. But it is difficult to view some of the rest as anything but Spanish moss hanging on the tree of American literature—once perhaps atmospheric but gone gray and dry.

A prime instance is Carson McCullers, most particularly her novella **The Ballad of the Sad Café** (now a film distributed by Merchant Ivory). From the title on, it is almost an epitome of ingrown artiness that depends for its reception on, in a way, browbeating readers: humbling them into acceptance of all this rampant sensibility at the risk of being thought philistine otherwise. Couch that sensibility in grotesquerie, as is done here, add a dollop of Loneliness and the Need for Love, and you're home free. McCullers was not a faker in this piece, but she deployed her symbology as cannily as George M. Cohan ever waved the American flag.

A small quasi-deserted Georgia village. A giant old woman who lives hermetically in a ramshackle house over

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Comfort of Strangers. *Eros and Thanatos in Venice. Harold Pinter's screenplay (from Ian McEwan's novel), Paul Schrader's direction, Christopher Walken's acting bring off this daring venture almost completely. (Reviewed 4/29/91)* **La Femme Nikita.** *Anne Parillaud is dazzling in this incredible but swift thriller—about an assassin for a sort of French CIA. (5/6/91)* **Journey of Hope.** *A Turkish farmer, wife, and child try to enter Switzerland illegally. Their odyssey, especially through the wintry Alps, is a stark epic. (5/13/91)* **Paris Is Burning.** *Gay black fashion shows, explored in Jennie Livingston's documentary. First, merely fascinating; then, subtly moving. (4/22/91)* —**SK**

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what used to be a café. A flashback to an explanation. She was once a local empress—storekeeper, moonshiner, cotton planter, impromptu doctor. One evening a cousin of hers arrives, a dwarf (of course), who takes up residence with her. Warmed by his influence, she opens a café in her store where she sells her moonshine.

Word comes that her husband, who had been in prison for robberies, has been paroled. Comes a flashback within the flashback: this man, a no-good, had fallen in love with her. For some reason, she married him, then refused to sleep with him, and eventually ran him off the place. Now he's back—to haunt and harass her. All this builds to a bloody, long fistfight between the giant woman and her husband, in which the dwarf plays a decisive part. Result: victory of husband and dwarf, their departure together, the dereliction of the café, and the solitude of the giant woman.

This material now reads less like Hawthorne or Brontë than an uncomfortably close cousin of S. J. Perelman. What's puzzling is why anyone felt enjoined to make a film of it today. When Edward Albee dramatized it in 1963—and Colleen Dewhurst played the giant—it already seemed ungainly and strained. It now seems a fashion whose vogue is well over. In 1991 even the greatness of Vanessa Redgrave is mired in the role, in the absence of any content but a lot of attitudinizing—not the character's, but the author's.

Keith Carradine plays the husband, and since it's more of a cliché part—the mean, guitar-playing cracker—he can get some mileage out of cliché acting. I can't criticize the acting of Cork Hubbert, who is the dwarf: I'm glad he found a job. To top this mess, we get Rod Steiger as the village preacher, giving us a refresher course in Method acting. (If you sniff in the middle of a line, that makes it real.)

Simon Callow, the actor, here directs his first film. He concentrates a good deal on shots that have a face in huge close-up at one side of the screen and action going on in the background. This device at least mirrors, in cinema terms, the affectations of the original.

Symbols of sexuality, of dark currents in American life, of power struggles, of that good old Need for Love—all these can be read into or out of this story. But what interpreters sometimes forget, in their busyness, is that interpretation isn't quite enough: the original ought to be worth interpreting. This isn't a film, it's a funeral service. ●

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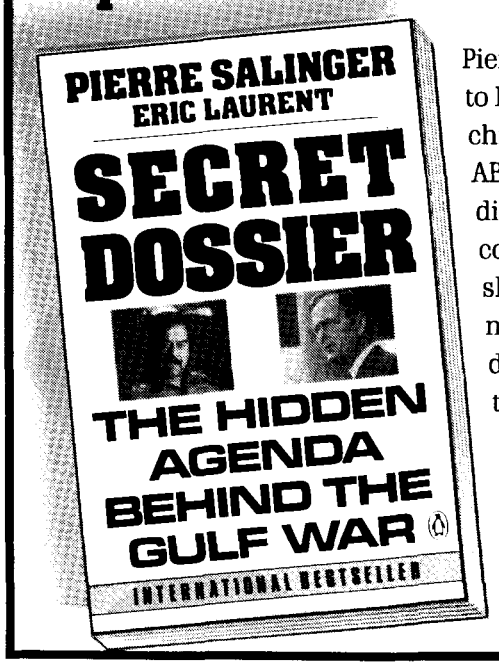

Pierre Salinger, press secretary to President Kennedy and now chief foreign correspondent of ABC News, and Eric Laurent, the distinguished French journalist, combine forces to reveal the shocking, illuminating, and never-before-told story of the diplomatic maneuvers that led to the Gulf War.

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From Myth to Murder

By Robert Alter

History, Religion, and Antisemitism
by Gavin I. Langmuir

(University of California Press, 380 pp., $37.50)

Toward a Definition of Antisemitism
by Gavin I. Langmuir

(University of California Press, 417 pp., $35)

Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany from Kant to Wagner
by Paul Lawrence Rose

(Princeton University Press, 395 pp., $29.95)

The horrors perpetrated on the Jews of Europe between 1933 and 1945, unprecedented at the very least in scale, have raised questions about the links between this modern paroxysm of collective hatred and the long history of Christian hostility toward the Jews. After an intense debate among historians about the continuities and the discontinuities between the medieval persecutions of the Jews and the modern ones, the conventional wisdom has become that the two forms of hatred are different in kind. To be sure, there are certain evident strands of connection—chiefly, a potent repertory of negative stereotypes inherited by Nazism from Christianity. Still, it is one thing to revile the Jews as the pariah people who rejected the true faith and murdered Christ, yet whose existence is respected as the necessary prologue to Christianity, and it is quite another thing to conceive the Jews in purportedly scientific terms as a subhuman, dangerously contaminating race that must be, like vermin, physically wiped out.

The difference between the medieval attitude and the modern attitude explains why Christian hostility toward the Jews produced sporadic massacres large and small, institutional and improvised persecution, forced conversions, and frequent expulsions, while Nazi hostility, aided by the mechanisms of a modern industrial state, led to a program of total extermination. Indeed, a good many analysts have argued that it is altogether misleading to use the term "anti-Semitism" for any hatred of the Jews that antedates the late 1870s, when this explicitly racist term was first given currency by Wilhelm Marr, the German right-wing political agitator. The terminological quarrel is not, I think, a trivial one. To resist any application of the modern label to earlier periods presupposes what needs to be demonstrated—that there is a qualitative chasm between the biological revulsion and the theological revulsion against the Jews.

New historical studies by Gavin I. Langmuir and Paul Lawrence Rose offer a clarifying binocular perspective on this question of continuity, because they focus, with different historiographical methods but with the same scrupulous attention to detail, on the opposite historical ends of the phenomenon. Langmuir is a medievalist, and essentially a social historian. Although he occasionally deals with earlier and later materials, his chief interest is northern European history from the time of the First Crusade in 1096 to the middle of the thirteenth century—when, as he shows, certain paranoid fantasies about the Jews became widespread in England, France, and Germany. Rose is an intellectual historian who concentrates on the 100 years or so between the Enlightenment and the threshold of this century, when many of these malevolent dreams were finally fulfilled.

The revolution to which Rose alludes in his title is the notion fostered largely by German thinkers of the right and the left that a radical transformation in consciousness, and then in social, moral, and political configurations, was required to clarify the uncertain identity of the German *Volk* and allow it to realize its historical destiny. Rose persuasively demonstrates that for almost all these revolutionary thinkers, the German Question was ensnarled in the Jewish Question, and that a deep kinship between left and right was expressed in the loaded opposition between *Deutschtum* and *Judentum* through which both sides of the political spectrum sought national self-definition.

These anxious investigations of the Jewish Question would, in time, suggest the notion (adumbrated in a variety of nineteenth-century thinkers) that it was a problem that could be solved only by means of a Final Solution. That conclusion, surely, is the consequence of a collective psychopathology; and a collective psychopathology, I would contend, requires a mythology as the vehicle of its dissemination. What Langmuir and Rose provide, taken together, is a genealogy of the enabling myths of anti-Semitism. It is the primacy of the mythological that unites medieval anti-Semitism with modern anti-Semitism. For the myths do not begin with Wilhelm Marr and Eugen Dühring in the latter part of the nineteenth century; they go back to figures of the twelfth century like Thomas of Monmouth and Peter the Venerable, and the thirteenth-century charismatic preacher Conrad of Marburg, with Luther later becoming the highly charged agent of their transmission to modernity.

A useful distinction has often been made between the anti-Semitic and the anti-Judaic. Langmuir's essential contribution is to grasp that this is not a neat distinction between medieval-Christian and modern-secular forms of prejudice—that it marks a difference, rather, between two different Christian views that can be discriminated chronologically and to a large extent geographically. Anti-Judaism is an understandable, indeed a necessary, expression of Christianity. It began as early as Paul and the Fourth Gospel, and in varying degrees it was a feature of most serious Christian thought and popular religious feeling until the very late advent of modern theological tolerance. Christian anti-Judaism made theological and political sense because Christianity, deriving as it did from biblical Judaism, had to conceive of itself as a supersession of the older faith.

Anti-Judaism could lead easily to social prejudice, of course, and to rather nasty expressions of hostility toward Jews. But by and large it did not, as Langmuir frequently observes, ascribe to Jews actions or attributes that could not be observed

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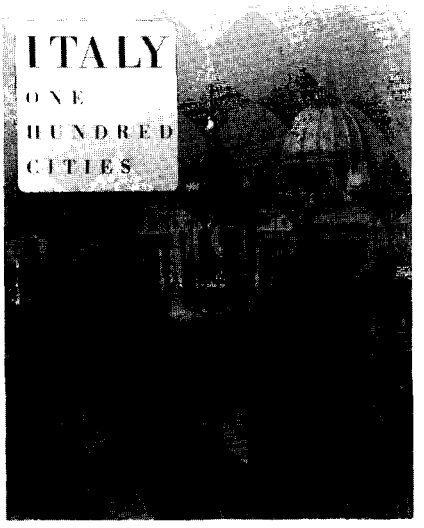

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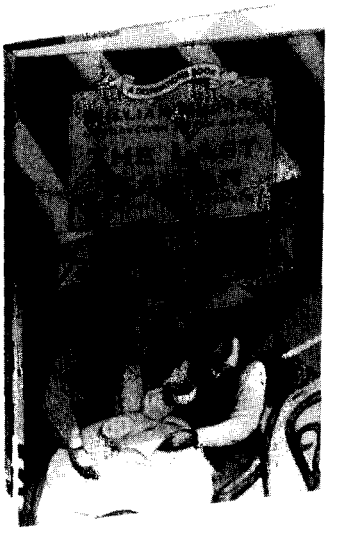

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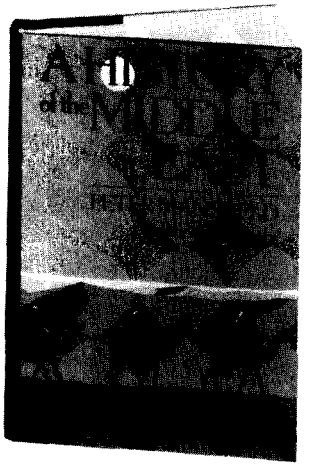

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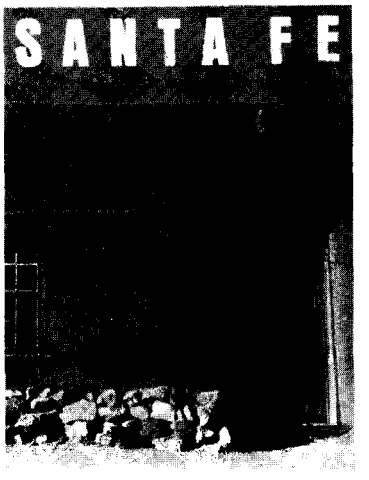

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in them. The Jews *did* emphatically reject the divinity of Jesus, the truth of the Gospels, and the authority of the Church, just as they were denounced for doing in anti-Judaic exhortation. A Jew so conceived is essentially an adversary, however despised, in a theological disputation. You may insult such a Jew, harass him, banish him, even force him to convert, but the theological animus itself provides no compelling warrant to murder him, his wife, his children. For that crime, you need the fuel of fantasy.

Once Jews are imagined, however, with tail and horns, with a distinctive stench, with menstruating males, forever plotting unspeakable acts against Christians—in 1941 Joshua Trachtenberg's classic study, *The Devil and the Jews*, established the contours of these extraordinary superstitions—they become a constant provocation to the knife and the torch. Langmuir proposes that any hostility toward the Jews that is based on fantastic projection rather than on intellectual observation can usefully be called anti-Semitism. I think that this is convincing; for even though the term "Semitic" was coined to explain modern notions of supposed physical anthropology, the "scientific" racism of the late nineteenth century, as Rose shows, was only the last twist of a mentality that had been prevalent since the Enlightenment, and before that since Luther, and before Luther since the high Middle Ages.

The crucial element of that mentality was not the mechanism of race, but the sovereign power of fantasy, which turned the Jewish Other into a grotesque projecting screen for Christian fears and rages. Langmuir persuasively argues that the anti-Judaism of the early Christian era prepared the ground for anti-Semitism, but that it was not a sufficient cause of the more virulent phenomenon. Throughout the first Christian millennium, hostility toward the Jews was almost entirely anti-Judaic. The first harbingers of a shift in attitude appeared in the massacres at the time of the First Crusade, which was the first recorded attempt in Christian Europe to destroy a Jewry physically. It was in the inflamed Rhineland at the end of the eleventh century that there emerged a new stress on the role of the Jews as deicides, which was the most psychologically charged of all the anti-Judaic indictments.

The transition to anti-Semitism occurred mainly in northern Europe, a fact that Langmuir does not attempt to account for in detail, and that I am certainly not competent to explain. Perhaps there was something more tolerant about Mediterranean Christianity, some trace of pagan pluralism. In any case, it appears to have been no accident that the genocidal impulse in modern anti-Semitism should have been implemented by Germany, or that Hitler's Mediterranean ally Italy never showed the requisite enthusiasm for the project of mass murder, never seemed to be really contaminated by the same anti-Semitic myth.

The most powerful chapters in Langmuir's books are the five central ones in *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*, which offer a careful circumstantial account of how the most prominent anti-Semitic mythemes were invented in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. (*Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* is a collection of Langmuir's scholarly papers on this subject from 1966 to the present, but apart from a couple of technical articles on the legal status of medieval Jewry, it is of more general interest than the integrally conceived *History, Religion, and Antisemitism*, which is directed to historians and is mostly devoted to elaborate methodological ground-clearing.) The first mytheme was devised by Thomas of Monmouth around 1150 as an explanation of the mysterious death at Norwich of a Christian boy named William, later duly canonized; the explanation was that Jews ritually murdered Christians by crucifixion. This accusation was to recur again and again, with or without the crucifixion motif, perhaps most visibly once more on English soil in the story of Hugh of Lincoln that was made famous to later generations by Chaucer. And it surfaced in modern times, too, in the Damascus Blood Libel of 1840, and then in several conspicuous east European incidents, beginning soon after the fulminations of Wilhelm Marr and flourishing simultaneously with the promulgation of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in the early years of our own century.

The second burst of mythographic energy occurred after an incident at the German town of Fulda in 1235, where a miller and his wife, returning from church on Christmas day, found their house burned to the ground and the bodies of their five sons inside. A massacre of the local Jewish population ensued, and a subsequent annal of the event, composed at Marbach some 120 miles away, explained that the Jews had murdered the children in order to drain their blood *ad suum remedium*, which, as Langmuir notes, is an ambiguous locution that "could have been used with either religious or medicinal connotations." In either case, the new element

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added to the myth was cannibalism, or vampirism: Jews not only murdered Christian children, they also imbibed their blood. This was clearly a mytheme whose time had come, for in the next few decades it cropped up repeatedly in various places in Germany and France. It figured prominently in the revival of the blood libel in modern Europe, and most famously in Russia, where Mendel Beilis was brought to trial in Kiev in 1911.

This same troubled period from the end of the eleventh century to the beginning of the fourteenth century also witnessed a rash of accusations against the Jews for poisoning the wells, a relatively familiar paranoid fantasy, and of desecrating the eucharist. The latter calumny may strike modern people as bizarre or tame; but when one recalls that this was precisely the period during which the belief in transubstantiation—the presence of the real body of Christ in the host—was being disseminated, and contested, one sees the deep connection with cannibalism and crucifixion, "mere" sacrilege being potently linked with the most violent acts against the vulnerable human body. Langmuir offers a useful formulation of the relations among the three medieval anti-Semitic myths: the second of the three in chronological appearance, he writes, "the fantasy of ritual cannibalism . . . can be seen as a halfway stage between the original fantasy of ritual murder by crucifixion and the fantasy about Jews and the Eucharist that appeared later."

This entire mythic complex, of course, is rooted in medieval Christian notions of ritual and faith, and so at first glance it would seem to have only marginal relevance to modern anti-Semitism. The power of the myth, however, transcends the doctrinal and ritual framework in which it was originally cast. I suspect that the key to that power is the ominous weight given to blood at the core of the myth. Christian blood is profusely shed in the ritual crucifixion; in the profanation of the host, the body and blood (the wafer and the wine being a ritual hendiadys) of Christ himself are contaminated; and in medicinal or ritual vampirism, the Jews allegedly drink the Christian blood, which gives them their uncanny power or cultic well-being.

The fixation on blood in Christian imaginings of the Jews would exert a baleful influence for the next seven centuries. As an instrument for marking the Jew as the suspect Other, it was first given institutional validation in the racial doctrine of *limpieza de sangre* in fifteenth-century Spain. (Unfortunately, Spain lies beyond Langmuir's temporal and geographical purview.) The obsession of Inquisition-era Spain with sorting out New Christians from Old Christians on the basis of what the Spanish themselves called "purity of blood" was an ominous portent.

Nobody responded more fully to the chthonic resonances of the blood myth than Martin Luther. His scurrilous pamphlet, *The Jews and Their Lies*, reissued in a popular edition by the Nazis in 1935, denounced the Jews for "enslaving" Christians through usury, poisoning wells, kidnapping and "piercing" Christian children, and thirsting for Christian blood. This crucial passage is quoted, understandably, by both Langmuir and Rose:

> So we are even at fault in not avenging all this innocent blood of our Lord and of the Christians which they shed for three hundred years after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the blood of the children they have shed since then (which still shines forth from their eyes and their skin). We are at fault in not slaying them.

This is certainly one of the most frightening statements ever made by a major Western religious thinker. The spooky remark about the blood of Christian children shining in the eyes and the skin of Jews vividly demonstrates that a scientific doctrine of ineradicable racial differences is not needed in order to attribute

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to the Jews a horrible and fascinating physical otherness: Jews batten on the Christian blood that they consume, deriving a weird luster from it; the sinister confluence in their veins of their alien blood and the blood of believers shows forth in the repellent allure of their skin and eyes, which are not wholly human.

There are numerous reasons why anti-Semitism turned genocidal in Germany, and not in France or England, which had the same medieval heritage. One could cite the disastrous aftermath of the Versailles Treaty, German authoritarianism, the appearance on the German stage of a hypnotically powerful demagogue, and much else. But surely it was important for the modern refurbishing of a murderous myth that Luther was German, and had no French or English counterpart. As Rose incisively observes, "Through the influence of Luther's language and tracts, a hysterical and demonizing mentality entered the mainstream of German thought and discourse; Luther in fact legitimated hysteria and paranoia in a major European culture."

Luther's version of the medieval blood fantasy surfaces in a dozen different yet related forms in the German intellectual tradition from Kant to Wagner, which Rose scrutinizes in illuminating detail. In the more moderate, liberal thinkers, the blood motif is not sounded, only its corollary that the Jews in their present condition are somehow beyond the pale of civilized humanity. This degraded state is variously attributed to the corrupting effect of Jewish religious and social traditions and to the oppression that the Jews have suffered. Still, even the liberals who wanted to extend some measure of civil rights to the Jews generally felt that this could be done only as the Jews are by stages redeemed from their subhuman condition. Imagining a new order of Jewish participation in German culture, Herder says, in a telling phrase, that Germans may hope to see the Jews "purely humanized [*rein-humanisiert*]."

"Moderation" of this sort was the exception, not the rule, in German thinking about the Jews from the Enlightenment onward. The main thrust of that body of thought was more nakedly mythological, and the heritage of the Middle Ages and Luther was a continual, palpable presence. The medieval myth of the Jew as murderous outcast and ritual vampire evolved into the conflated mythic figuration of the Jew as Ahasverus, the Wandering Jew, who personified the eternal pariah status of the Jew, and Moloch, the god that consumes human sacrifices, who personified the Jew's bloodthirstiness. Moloch, of course, is a pagan deity drawn from the Hebrew Bible, but he is turned against his old Israelite enemy; some German writers simply used Moloch as a metaphor for Jewish rapacity, and others seriously contended that the cult of Moloch, however proscribed by the biblical writers, was in fact the true religion of ancient Israel, and that the Jews in their dispersion contrived to practice it by other means.

The Ahasverus myth appears to have been invented after a Lutheran cleric named Paulus von Eitzen met a bearded Jewish vagrant in a Hamburg church in 1542. This embodiment of Jewish collective guilt was imagined to have mocked Christ on his way to crucifixion, and to have been doomed to wander in deathless suffering (rather like the later folk tradition about the fate of vampires). Ahasverus is linked with murder in his implication in the guilt of the original crucifixion. Rose associates him with the figure of the Sacred Executioner that the speculative British historian Hyam Maccoby finds in the legend of Cain. I would rather stress the psychological salience of Ahasverus as a bearded old man. As Norman Cohn has shrewdly argued, there is a strong Oedipal component in anti-Semitic fantasy. The Jews are an ancient, patriarchal people, the paternalistic imposers of a resented restrictive law; their conspiracy is carried out by the "Elders of Zion"; their victims are helpless Christian children, whose vulnerable bodies are exposed to their terrible knives.

In any case, the preoccupation with blood in the German discussion of the Jews in the nineteenth century is obsessive and disturbing. Sometimes blood was invoked quite literally, often it was used metaphorically; but it is the nature of mythic thinking to confuse the literal and the figurative. (Langmuir nicely calls the process "symbolic literalism.") The Damascus Affair of 1840 gave considerable impetus to the blood-minded literalists. Georg Friedrich Daumer, writing to Feuerbach in 1842, claimed that he had discovered an oven and old bones in the cellars of the old synagogue at Nuremberg. Soon after he published *The Fire and Moloch Cult of the Ancient Hebrews*, in which he claimed to demonstrate the persistence of a cult of ritual murder among the Jews, and hence the truth of the scandal in Damascus. On the political left, and at a certain distance (though not far enough by half) from such fanaticism, blood became a metaphor; the early Moses Hess, emphasizing (as Marx would) an intrinsic bond between capitalism and the Jews, spoke of money as "social coagulated blood" and imagined capitalist exploitation as a reenactment of the crucifixion in secular terms. Hess's tract of 1843, *The Essence of Money*, is filled with images of cannibalism and bloodsucking. (The vampire image has other variants. Herder spoke of the Jews as a "parasitic plant" drawing out the sap of the European nations; Constantin Frantz, first a Young Hegelian and then a Christian conservative, described them as a tapeworm in the national body.)

Wagner was in some ways the culmination of this incipiently genocidal line of thought. He conjured with blood both literally and figuratively in his reflections on the Jews (and in his operas as well, notably in *Parsifal*, his hymn to a Germanic Christianity obsessed with a bodily wound and fulfilled in the final tribute to the spear and the chalice of blood). His essay *Judaism in Music*, which appeared in 1850, picked up the money-blood metaphor introduced by the socialists, but

Round and Round

When I remember the flamingos, the pink, explosive
flaming of one and then another like blossoms in the tropics
as they process across their island at the zoo
and assume the water, never uttering a sound,
I am someone else. Then I'm a third man
to see the lagoon take that color and the wind, too,
stunned by their preening to the pulsing, heightened shade
the sun setting gives my skin the dead of winter.
And then I'm cut loose, watching these frail armadas
set sail for nowhere but the containment of human eyes
where they drift, no one, nowhere but in confines of my mind,
a life passing while being stared at by me alone.
This is one of the circles I run in. But I've known smaller.

PETER COOLEY

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transformed it almost into a datum of physical experience: "All is turned to money by the Jew. Who thinks of noticing that the guileless looking scrap of paper is slimy with the blood of countless generations? What the heroes of the arts . . . have invented . . . from the millennia of misery, today the Jew converts into an art-bazaar." By the 1870s Wagner, having embraced the biological doctrine of race of the new anti-Semitism, was contemplating the actual blood that flowed in Jewish veins together with the blood, both literal and figurative, that Jews imbibed.

Like Hitler after him, Wagner combined a loathing of the Jews with a deranged vegetarianism, and argued that Aryan Christianity had become infected, through the contaminating presence of the Jews, with blood-lust, with the desire for slaughter in battle and for the consumption of living animals: "Blood at last, and blood alone, seemed fit to sustain the conquerors' courage. . . . Attack and defense, want and war, victory and defeat, lordship and thralldom, all soaked with the seal of blood." The rescue of Germany from this slide into the abyss required first of all putting an end to miscegenation with the Jews, a tainted race with a cannibalistic past that was barely sublimated in its present activities. Aryans were to avoid "above all the degenerative mixing of the heroic blood of noblest races with that of former eaters of humans, now trained to be the business-agents of society."

In Wagner's formulation, a single mythic complex was fashioned out of two opposed senses of blood: the innocent Christian blood imbibed by the vampiric Jew, and the degenerate blood of the Jew himself, which he seeks futilely to enrich either by miscegenation or vampirism. Wagner may well have teased out an implication of Luther's image of Christian blood shining in Jewish faces: the Jews have to tap into Christian lifelines because of the inferior blood that courses in their own veins. The new element is miscegenation, which was only a marginal possibility in Luther's time. After the emancipation of the Jews in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, Christian blood seemed doubly threatened; it could be drained off by Jewish rapacity or tainted by sexual contact with Jews. Nothing could express more strikingly how anti-Semitic fantasy reflects the most primal anxieties of the anti-Semite: the fear of being consumed and the fear of being contaminated.

What this whole chilling story suggests, especially in the lurid light of its denouement in the middle of our own century

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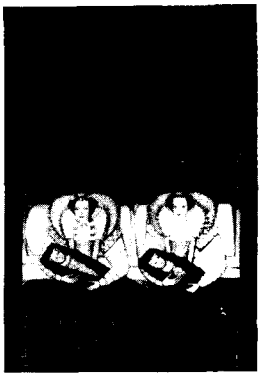

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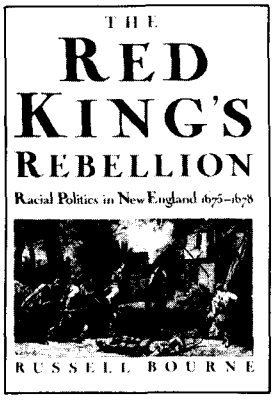

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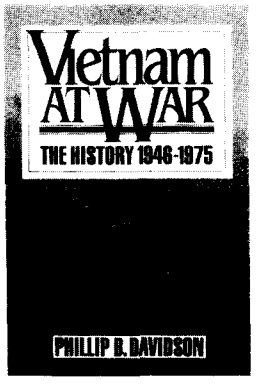

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(ovens and bones indeed), is the awesome power over human events of word, image, and narrative. If the death by fire of five Christian children at Fulda in 1235 had provoked only a massacre of local Jews, the echoes of that incident would have soon subsided. It was the intervention of a writer, the Marbach Chronicler, that turned the event into an illustration of a timeless story that fixed for future generations the image of the Jew's demonic otherness. And the genocide in which the German discussion of the Jews finally ended would not have been possible without the prior, time-honored dehumanization of the victims—even their friends thought that the Jews needed to be *reinhumanisiert*—that was effected through a system of language and narrative. Words are the first weapons of mass destruction.

Rose is especially instructive about the radical and dangerous ambiguity of German words in relation to their Jewish referents. Luther lamented his inability to convert the Jews, and went on to say that "I can close their mouths [*das Maul . . . ihnen zustopfen*] so that there will be nothing for them to do but lie upon the ground [*herniederlegen muessen*]." What precisely did he mean by this language? He appears to have left the meaning, in the most ominous sense of the expression, to his audience's imagination. German is particularly rich in verbal and substantive terms for extirpation, and the texts of the revolutionary thinkers canvassed by Rose bristle with them: *Vernichtung* (annihilation), *Untergang* (destruction), *Vertilgung* (total extermination), *Ausrottung* (driving out, as with vermin), *Austreibung* (expulsion or exorcism).

Most of the political theorists of the left and right would have considered themselves men of humane values, certainly idealists, and they would have defended their promiscuous recourse to the language of extermination on the grounds that they were using the terms in some figurative, allegorical, or ideational sense. It is especially instructive that the German secular refurbishing of the medieval myth should have begun largely with thinkers who are conventionally identified as rationalists—with Kant, with the Left Hegelians, with Marx. Some of these writers can be accused of complicity rather than direct guilt: the lethal ambiguity of the terms of discussion, the shifts between the historical and the mythological, the literal and the figurative, were a cover that made it possible even for men of good conscience to speak about the unspeakable.

What most of them were proposing, of course, was not the actual murder of Jewish men, women, and children, but an intransigent struggle against an immemorial Jewish principle. That principle was variously construed as egoism, usurious greed, commitment to a life-denying law, social or genetic decadence, base hedonism; but whatever it was, it had to be extirpated if the German soul was to be saved. This symbolic mode of thinking allowed the anti-Semite some leeway to enjoy friendly relations with individual Jews in whom the nefarious Jewish principle was deemed to have gone through a satisfactory process of *Untergang*. But as Rose puts it, the Jew, together with the agenda of destruction directed against him, oscillated in the German revolutionary imagination between metaphor and flesh-and-blood person. The biologism of anti-Semitic racism from the 1870s onward tied the metaphorical idea inextricably to Jewish flesh and blood, with the most dire consequences.

It was ominous enough that Christians in twelfth-century England and thirteenth-century Germany and France came to conceive Jews as ritual murderers ghoulishly fixated on Christian bodies and blood. But for all its power and its propagandists, the Church was not a totally encompassing structure in medieval life. There existed also a political realm, which was sometimes in opposition to the ecclesiastical one, and a social realm with its own momentum. Medieval experience was more various than is commonly supposed; the mythological drama of knife-wielding Jew and vulnerable Christian, however appealing to dark urges, was staged with a certain intermittence, while Christians and Jews also continued to live side by side, engage in trade, enjoy some modest cultural and intellectual exchange, and sometimes, surreptitiously, even meet as friends or lovers.

In this respect, the modern state has been ironically less various than the medieval one, and an important distinction between medieval anti-Semitism and modern anti-Semitism may be drawn. Revolutionary political thought in the modern era was comprehensive—one could argue, indeed, that it was implicitly totalitarian. The scope to which it aspired, its dream of totality, enabled a new thoroughness in the persecution of the Jews. Rose makes the telling observation that

> in the new revolutionary epoch, the mythological and the social were no longer two distinct worlds as in the Christian mental structure, but had now fused together. The revolution demanded jurisdiction over both the realm of mythology and of society. The result was that there was no longer any

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autonomous social space for Jews to live within.

Rose characterizes anti-Semitism as "perhaps the most pregnant myth of the European mind." At another point in his excellent book, though he is chary of psychological speculation, he suggests that it is "a universal mental structure, responding to an emotional imperative, rather than being simply a set of responses to a particular social, economic, political, or doctrinal condition." The mythic narrative, once it was devised by figures such as Thomas of Monmouth, proved to work all too well, and also to be remarkably supple, so that as historical horizons shifted it could maintain its power and still accommodate all sorts of variations on the basic pattern.

The question of why this myth has been so alluring is vast, perhaps bottomless. Langmuir suggests that it surfaced in medieval Christendom at a moment of anxious doubt on the part of northern European Christians about some of the central tenets of their faith—the eucharist and the doctrine of transubstantiation, the meaning of the crucifixion. There was, no doubt, social anxiety as well, a malaise about collective identity, as there was in modern Germany, too. And beyond such historically specific considerations, the myth of the vampire Jew, the pariah with tainted blood who thirsts for the blood of Christians, powerfully addresses an underlying unhappiness about bodily existence itself, about life coursing through a vessel so fragile that a little puncture will make it ebb away. The rage and the frustration over the arbitrary and sometimes sudden fate of death to which we are all subjected found a particularly satisfying target in the image of the bearded alien who lies in wait for helpless children with his sharpened knife.

The economic and social location of the Jews in Christian Europe set the stage for assigning them this archetypal role. They were not only the ambiguous bearers of the rejected "father faith," they were also the first Europeans to assume the social standing of permanent resident outsiders. The degree of their integration in Christian society varied with time and place, but by and large they remained a people relegated to the margins of the social world, living in enclaves, in close proximity to rather than within the dominant society. Economically, by the time of the Crusades (though not earlier), they were edged into moneylending in disproportionate numbers. Thus the deadly association of money with lifeblood, usury with vampirism, readily fed into fantasies of Jews preying on Christian blood, from the medieval era to modern Germany.

Whatever the reason for the persistence of the myth, its very durability helps explain the bizarre epilogue to this tale of nine centuries that is being enacted in our own moment: anti-Semitism without Jews. Poland, of course, is the prime example. Poland's Jewish masses were murdered by the Nazis; of the few that remained, all but a handful were driven out in the late 1950s. *Vernichtung* was followed by *Austreibung*. This has not prevented people in recently liberated Poland, however, from virulent denunciations of the Jewish enemy within. The mythic Jew fills the need when the real Jew is absent. One is tempted to invoke the anti-Semitic legacy of Christianity, but it cannot explain, say, the weird popularity of anti-Semitism in Japan, where a translation of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* has sold hundreds of thousands of copies. The reach of the myth, and its resilience, have become historical causes themselves.

It is hard to imagine, of course, that they will ever again cause the untold grief that they have caused in the past. Still, nonchalance would be foolish. Anti-Semitism tapped deep into folk culture, but it was, from the twelfth century to the twentieth century, largely the creation of writers and intellectuals, from Thomas of

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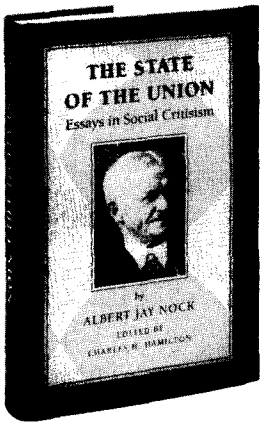

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The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy by Albert O. Hirschman

(Harvard University Press, 197 pp., $25)

Albert Hirschman is an optimist. He has, he has said, "a bias for hope." Only once, in an essay in the early 1980s on "the rise and decline of development economics," the field in which he'd worked in the preceding three decades, did Hirschman allow himself to wonder whether hope had been misplaced. Too many of the "developing" countries, he suggested in that essay, or at least too many of the developing countries in Latin America with which he was most familiar, had shown themselves to be driven by "passions" as much as by "interests." The contenders had given up trying to balance the conflicting economic tendencies and negotiate their differences. Impatience had turned into panic, and the military, who possessed the power, had taken over.

Unlike most progressives, however, Hirschman is also an ironist. He loves a paradox. In the first of his extended adventures into intellectual history, a long essay in 1977 that he subtitled *Political Arguments for Capitalism Before Its Triumph,* he reflected on the fact that capitalism, the cause (it's now said) of these reactive passions, had originally been seen as a means with which to calm them. The prudent pursuit of material interest, it came to be thought in the eighteenth century, would quietly displace talk of honor and virtue, and in so doing it would dissolve the obsessions that such talk caused. (As industrial capitalism got under way, of course, some were to see it differently. Marx, in this respect not so much one of the new radicals as one of the last conservatives, ingeniously transferred the old ideals to the class that—as he saw it—produced the capital but did not enjoy it; he insisted that a firm and enduring virtue could be realized only in a postcapitalist state.)

Ironic optimism is unusual in social science. Progressives, convinced that all good things can go together, even if in ways that nobody intends at the time, have not often been receptive to the thought that there might be certain *un*progressive contradictions. They are too often, as Hirschman says, "mired in earnestness." By contrast, conservatives are not, at least when things are going their way. Conservatives, however, can lose their humor, and with it their grip, when things are against them, or so they think. It's about this loss of perspective that Hirschman is now curious.

His curiosity crystallized in 1985, at the height of the most recent reaction, during a talk by Ralf Dahrendorf to a Ford Foundation group convened to consider "the crisis of the welfare state." Dahrendorf recalled the uplifting story that T. H. Marshall had told the English in some lectures at Cambridge in 1949—a story that was part explanation, part celebration, on which young sociologists in that country were raised until Thatcher—of the progress of citizenship. Civil rights, Marshall said, were extended in the eighteenth century, political rights in the nineteenth century, and social rights—including rights to welfare—in the twentieth century. In sum, all was now essentially complete. Listening to Dahrendorf, Hirschman recalled (as Marshall, talking at a more confident time, had not) that there had been vigorous objections to the extension of all three enfranchisements, and not just—the matter of the moment—to the last. He decided to explore the forms that those objections had taken.

The result, in *The Rhetoric of Reaction,* has the disingenuous simplicity that those who know Hirschman's work will have come to expect. In essence, he suggests, where conservatives have bothered with causal arguments at all, they have deployed one or the other of just three. The first is the argument from perversity. "A particularly sweeping, if heavy-footed, formulation" of this, as he says, was that of Adam Müller, a political economist and romantic who translated Burke's unfriendly *Reflections on the Revolution in France.* The history of the Revolution, Müller declared in 1819, "constitutes a proof, administered continuously over thirty years, that man, acting by himself and without religion, is unable to break any chains that oppress him without sinking in the process into still deeper slavery." The point is simple. *Weltverbesserer,* "world-betterers," are really and in fact (here Hirschman coins a new term) *Weltverschlechterer,* "world-worseners."

The second is the argument from futility. In 1856, in *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution,* Tocqueville suggested that there had been very little break from the past in 1789. He maintained that many of the vaunted conquests of the Revolution—the centralization of administration, the increase in owner-operated small farms, even some of the "Rights of Man and Citizen"—had already been instituted under the old order. "One wonders," remarked Jean Jacques Ampère, another historian, a friend of Tocqueville's, and a fellow-member of the Academy, "what the Revolution has changed and why it has happened." One might wonder, indeed, whether it had to happen at all. (Simon Schama's *Citizens,* written for an even more conservative time, is a variation on this: even if the changes were not already under way, Schama has hinted, they would soon have come. They did not need a radically new regime.)

The third is the argument from jeopardy. It came into its own in objections to the extension of the franchise in the nineteenth century. "Surely the heroic work of so many centuries," Robert Lowe asked the House of Commons in the debate on the Second Reform Bill in 1866, "the matchless achievements of so many wise heads and strong hands, deserve a nobler consummation than to be sacrificed at the shrine of revolutionary passion, or the maudlin enthusiasm of humanity?" In extending the franchise still further, Lowe argued, and he was himself a Liberal, "We are about to pluck down on our own heads the venerable temple of our liberty and glory." "I regard it as one of the greatest dangers," he explained, "to transfer power from the hands of property and intelligence and place it in the hands of men whose whole life is necessarily occupied in daily struggles for existence."

And "if for four centuries," inveighed Henry Maine twenty years later, "there had been a very widely extended franchise and a very large electoral body in

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this country, there would have been no reformation of religion, no change of dynasty, no toleration of Dissent, not even an accurate Calendar. The threshing machine"—he was thinking of opposition to labor-saving devices—"the power-loom, the spinning-jenny, and possibly the steam-engine, would have been prohibited." England might even, like the United States, have suffered a popular opposition to Free Trade.

The fight about the franchise is now over. The favored argument against it, however, lives on in the form of hostility to the welfare state. The "renewed commitment to the idea of equality," argued the conservative Samuel Huntington in America in the middle of the 1970s, the commitment to spending on minorities, women, and the poor, had "in the 1960s produced a substantial increase in governmental activity and a substantial decline in governmental authority." Democracy—which had excited the same sort of frisson in the nineteenth century, at least in Europe, as "socialism" was to do everywhere in the twentieth—had been seen as a threat to liberty. The modern welfare state was now seen as a threat to both. If progressive reforms do not backfire, as the Müllers argued they would, or are not just futile, they are an active hazard, conservatives claim, to what we have.

As Hirschman observes, there is no very close connection between what conservatives happen to be objecting to and which of the three arguments they use to make their objection. (Nor has it been usual for them—not least because it's not at all easy—to deploy more than one of the three arguments at a time. Their objections more typically come in sequence.) Perversity, futility, jeopardy: each is still deployed. Nor, as Hirschman came to see, is the conservatives' repertory theirs alone. Marx mischievously reinterpreted the Scottish and English political economists to argue that the new engine of wealth would perversely induce unprecedented misery. Lenin argued that any conflict between progress and democracy didn't much matter, since bourgeois democracy was a sham and futile; in this respect, Hirschman suggests, he was affected by the criticisms that the gloomy Gaetano Mosca and Robert Michels and others were making of the new workers' social democracy in Europe. More recent socialists have suggested that the welfare state, or corporatism, or other means of trying to meet some of the more immediate demands of the working class, are all devices to alleviate the effects of capitalism, and jeopardize true socialism.

All such arguments, Hirschman is sure, from the left or the right, are "immature." They ignore the fact that there are dangers in both action and inaction. They suppose that theory, or the past, or (usually) a selective view of the past informed by theory are good guides to the future. Those who propose such arguments are impatient of the kind of close, open-ended, and finely balanced debate that complicated decisions require. If it is correct to say that democracy can only get going when there is a standoff between political contenders (the kind of standoff that Argentinians and Brazilians, for example, have long refused to acknowledge), and if it is correct to say that democracy can only keep going if the contenders are ready to accept that they may change their mind, then extreme and simpleminded arguments from perversity, futility, and jeopardy are themselves not good for political health.

From which it is a short step to the conclusion that general theories are not good either. The admirable Tocqueville suspected as much:

> When one studies the history of our revolution, one sees that it was conducted in the same spirit that presides over many abstract books on the principles of government. Same attraction toward general theories, complete systems of legislation, and exact symmetry of laws; same contempt for existing facts; same trust in theory; same taste for what is original, ingenious and novel in designing institutions; same bent for remaking simultaneously the entire constitution, following the rules of logic and a unique plan, instead of attempting to amend its parts. A frightening spectacle!

Providence, on which many of those who pointed to the perversity of the French Revolution had relied, became the social theorists' Law. The Law was sometimes straightforward, sometimes dialectical; but it was formed and framed in Theory. That there are as many general laws or theories as there are prejudices, so that we can always find one somewhere to suite our case, is a tribute to nothing but ingenuity. Yet in the modern world, in which democracy is morally supreme and in which disinterested inquiry, we like to think, is democracy's servant, such theories can too easily assume the authority, however spurious, of reasoned Science.

Hirschman himself does not press quite this conclusion. But he hovers at the brink, and in so doing he is all but postmodern. In their first flush, of course, the avowed postmodernists have gone too far. It's not merely, they've claimed, that modernity's Promethean streak, the aspiration, as Daniel Bell once described it, "to make man the master of change and the redesigner of the world

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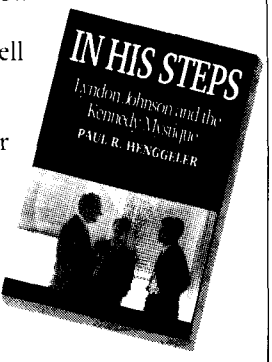

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to conscious plan and purpose," is an aspiration that runs far ahead of the facts and of our possible knowledge of them, and thus of what we can know of possibility itself. It's also, they've gone on to say, that the very idea of a social science, the idea that we can *know* anything at all, and thus, the idea of a fact itself, and of its having discernible causes and consequences, has been a mistake. If there is pattern or coherence, they insist, it exists only in our talk. The more old-fashioned sort of reactionary, the sort that Hirschman is writing about, thinks that reform, where it's not just futile, is a dangerous game. Postmodernists think it's just play. The line between the two is fine.

But one doesn't have to swallow all of postmodernism to accept its central truth. The intellectual extravagances of general social science have their source in the Promethean streak. They arise where revolution is in the air, and they linger, as in France until the 1980s, or in the United States still, where the ideals of revolution remain strong, or where the culture is excessively rhetorical, as in Latin America; and they prompt similarly simple reactions. They're the voice of anxious radicals, and of conservatives who are anxious that the radicals may succeed. They are first cousin to ideology. In the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the simplifications were radical in the more ordinary, anticonservative sense. Now, at the end of the twentieth, they are tearing at the roots—in the West in welfarism, in the East in a more comprehensive socialism, in the Third World in overactive, overstaffed national states—that radicalisms themselves, it's feared, have put down. But the direction of the ideologies, left, right, or liberal, is all but incidental. What they have in common is their primitive shape and sweeping scope.

It would be rash, for exactly the reasons that Hirschman here so nicely exposes, to predict that the Age of Revolution, or the Age of Modernity, or the Age of Promethean Social Science, is coming to an end. Nor should we expect that the more conservative reactions to that Age's rash thoughts will themselves, as Hirschman hopes, become "a little less disabused and bitter," that they will express a little more of "that naïveté they are so bent on denouncing," be more open to the unexpected and the possible. In short, that more of those who think about social, economic, and political affairs will think like Hirschman himself. The urge to simplify and the taste for drama, after all, are not new.

And yet some insist on a reason for hope. The grounds are there. Some see them already in the end of Communist rule in Eastern Europe, the beginning of its end in the Soviet Union, and what must now surely be a sighting of such a beginning in China; in the convergence of political parties in Western Europe; and in the acceptance by many states in the Third World of the disciplines forced upon them by the IMF. The end of ideology—again, or at last—really is here. But this is too simple. At least it's too simple if "the end of ideology" merely means the victory of the more dogmatic sort of liberalism that, as Hirschman has remarked, continues to mar appraisals of welfare states and of the developments in Europe, and that has driven the less considered policies that the United States, through the IMF and the World Bank, has been forcing upon the Third World.

This false euphoria, or so one hopes, may be short-lived. The problems of Eastern Europe, and what is still, just, the Soviet Union, are only beginning. The states of the Third World have been shocked out of the more or less comprehensive benefit of the doubt to which they'd become accustomed, but what they've been shocked into is yet to be seen. Given the strength of Western Europe and East Asia, together with the increasing economic weakness of the United States, a more pragmatic "new world order" may not be just a New World order. Futures now are more evidently plural, and they are arguably more open, less guided by divisive certainties, than at any time since the 1770s.

Thought, of course, always takes time to catch up. It's too soon to say that grander theories have had their day; the sheer variety and complexity of the present, and the speed with which it communicates with itself, may excite yet further shortcuts. But events, and the example of a thinker like Hirschman, make it possible at least to hope that the finer side of the Enlightenment—that is, a skeptical but optimistic engagement with the world as it is, as distinct from blindingly overexcited visions of how it might be, or how it might remain, if only progressives would stop interfering with it—could soon have its day.

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Behind Gravity's Back

BY THOMAS R. EDWARDS

The MacGuffin by Stanley Elkin

(Linden Press/Simon and Schuster, 320 pp., $19.95)

The hero of Stanley Elkin's splendid new novel, Robert ("Bobbo") Druff, is Commissioner of Streets in an unnamed, middle-sized Midwestern city. Druff is 58, overweight, often impotent, deeply mistrustful of body and mind after a terrible history of medical disaster—a massive cardiac infarction, collapsed lungs, circulatory blockage, open-heart surgery—that began when he was in his 30s. Once a vigorous political campaigner who served as city councilman, council president, and undermayor, he now holds an undemanding appointive office that puts him out of the loop, though he still fantasizes about the U.S. presidency. People now seem to be making allowances for him, always bad news for pols, who want not to have doors held for them or seats offered them in crowded buses, but to be well and truly *feared*.

Bobbo Druff is an unrepentant old pro, believing not in broad social objectives but in services: for him, good government "was meat inspectors, guys who checked the restaurants, the building codes. It was the department of sanitation, the fire department, a strong police. It was knowing what to do with the infrastructure, making the trains run on time without harming the Gypsies." Elkin is not unaware of, or unmoved by, the whiff of technocracy or even home-cooked fascism that enters the room with such views; and Bobbo Druff, who never actually solicits bribes but happily pockets the graft that often comes his way, may like so many of Elkin's other protagonists strike the tender-minded as a bad man. But to frown at his insistence that "government is all traffic and threats to tow your car" is not to banish every suspicion that our present urban nightmares owe at least no more to people like him than to good and honest people nobly pursuing "the whole participatory democracy thing."

If Druff is a cultural dinosaur, he's not

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a heavily armored one. The waning of his power leaves him feeling "like little bits of the British Empire." He chews coca leaves (sent him by "a cousin in Peru"), suspects that his clubhouse cronies want to dump him and that his city limo is bugged, worries a lot about his son Mikey—a large and muscular lad of 30 still living at home, taking fairly random graduate courses and apparently unemployable, fearful that his parents will die or abandon him and anxious to know their net worth—and about the mysterious hit-and-run death of Mikey's mysterious Lebanese girlfriend, Su'ad.

Druff gradually comes to feel that his present life makes more sense than life is supposed to. When he casually meets, propositions, and (to his surprise) wins the favors of Margaret Gloria, an attractive middle-aged department store buyer, his elation at participating in the sexual revolution he thought he'd missed has to compete with his growing suspicion that he's being set up for something, since Margaret seems to have known both Su'ad and Mikey and to have odd connections with other people he knows, from his limo drivers all the way up to the mayor.

Hence the novel's title, after the gimmick in Hitchcock movies that imputes some sinister coherence to the contingencies of ordinary experience. Druff's MacGuffin is a particular kind of oriental rug he keeps seeing in other people's living rooms, bathrooms, and cars, but more broadly it's "the spirit of narrative in his life (sort of)," both a fear that hidden forces are conspiring against him—one not altogether unnatural in politicians, or in anyone living through recent history—and an invigorating challenge to his own personal depletion. Elkin also makes it a reflection about the novelist's art, about the opposition between wanting fiction to be more coherent than life itself and wanting not to distort everyday factuality in the service of "meaning." "Life goes on even in the chase scenes," Druff reflects while on the toilet, "the body had its own agenda and would not be caught up in the desiderata of even an engaged will."

The conflict between randomness and purpose has always been a large theme in Elkin's fiction. By now it shouldn't be necessary to insist on the importance of his work: a list of the American novelists who have most mattered over the last three decades would be a pitifully short one if it left him off. But why he matters is the question, and the answer has less to do with "themes" than with how he writes, the kinds of action that his extraordinary verbal powers engage.

First, of course, he is a sublimely funny writer, an inspired stand-up performer who explores, like any great comedian, the ability of language to cut itself loose from its normal duties of naming and describing the merely real. Here is Bobbo Druff when, bemused by Eros, he forgets that it's Saturday morning and walks among his townspeople dressed for the office:

> And who only then, wheedled down from his dudgeon by the curious amiability of their attention, understood it, took it in. Recognizing the truth in their windbreakers and comfortable old-shoe ways, in the holes of their sweaters and the stained sweatsuits they wore, their patched trousers and cotton drawstring running pants, all the lazy weekend mufti of their relaxed civilian stances. Or, looking up at him from the broken concentration of their jogging, their jammed athletic traffic, as if he, respectably dressed, rather than they, clothed in their juices, in all the garb of their flushed selves, their soaked shorts and sweaty T-shirts, curiously revealing and intimate almost as the furious metabolism of violent lovemaking or of bodies in fever crisis, was the street's odd eyeful. Or stooped, looking up at him from the level of their spades and shovels and trowels, all their trident tools and modified hoes, pausing over paper packets of spinach and pea and lettuce seeds to brush the hair out of their eyes or knock away excess dirt with the Mickey Mouse fingertips of their enormous, rough cloth gardening gloves. . . .

STANLEY ELKIN BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Though they look "up" at him, Druff is the one at a disadvantage, and the social power of casual dress and "civilian stances" is nicely recognized. More important, Druff is gifted, like other Elkin protagonists, with almost miraculous verbal energies. He is represented as a creative imaginist whose words can generate, when their associative powers are unloosed, not more meanings, but more words. As any Commissioner of Streets well knows, improving roads seldom gets people to their destinations sooner, but it always produces more traffic.

The truth that Druff recognizes here is not really "in" the clothing he sees on his constituents, but in the words that turn their garments into selves, into the body juices that signify their mortal existences within a rhythm of generation and physical decline that includes the natural process their gardening participates in. For the moment they seem like some confident peasantry whose amiable attention discomfits a lordly superior; and the fact that this altered relationship is only momentary, that it will revise itself again on Monday or when Druff slips into something more comfortable, testifies to the fluidity of "class" in America, and beyond that, perhaps, to the imaginings of new selves in new places that first created Druff's city and America itself, and have been continually re-creating them ever since.

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At such a moment Bobbo Druff finds his place in the idea of America that Elkin has been advancing in his fiction for three decades. His is a republic populated by odd and shady types—talk-show hosts, franchisers, psychics, bail bondsmen, dubious merchants prospering on hype and low margins, free-lance rabbis schooled at off-shore yeshivas, and so on, people whose resourceful if not altogether trustworthy gifts of language enable them to take root in the chinks and hollows of our culture and give its coarse irregularity unexpected interest and even beauty. Great comedians, like great salesmen, can talk you into just about anything, and the American as pitchman is a figure that may embarrass our most earnest hopes for the national character. But in Elkin's hands (he too is selling, of course) embarrassment is a necessary effect, persuading us that we *need* the product if we're to be what we should want to be.

Like other rhetoricians, salesmen do best when they believe in their own pitch and the goods it recommends. Great selling, Elkin knows, is an expression of love: for the product, for the customer, for one's own con, as Ben Flesh, the hero of Elkin's *The Franchiser* and the son of a theatrical costumer, memorably reveals to the employees of his failing Chicago dance studio:

> "I come," he said, "from Fred Astaire! I bring Ginger Rogers' spicy 'Hi.' Fred says tell them. He says make them understand. He says when you see Miss Clara, Miss Jenny, and Miss Hope, when you see Mr. Luis and Mr. Al, when you get to Chicago and stand on the cutting tables on the evening of the Nineteenth Annual Fiscal Year Gala, when you hang suspended from your suspenders in the convenient clothes of romance, your uniform of cruise and ceremony, suspended in them, your feet barely touching your hose, your shoes your pop's cutting tables, your pop's cutting tables your planet, let them know that our work, the work we do, is important, that to walk is good but to dance is better, that what we do here is the ultimate leap; to go behind gravity's back and spit in the face of the heavy. Hah? Heh?"

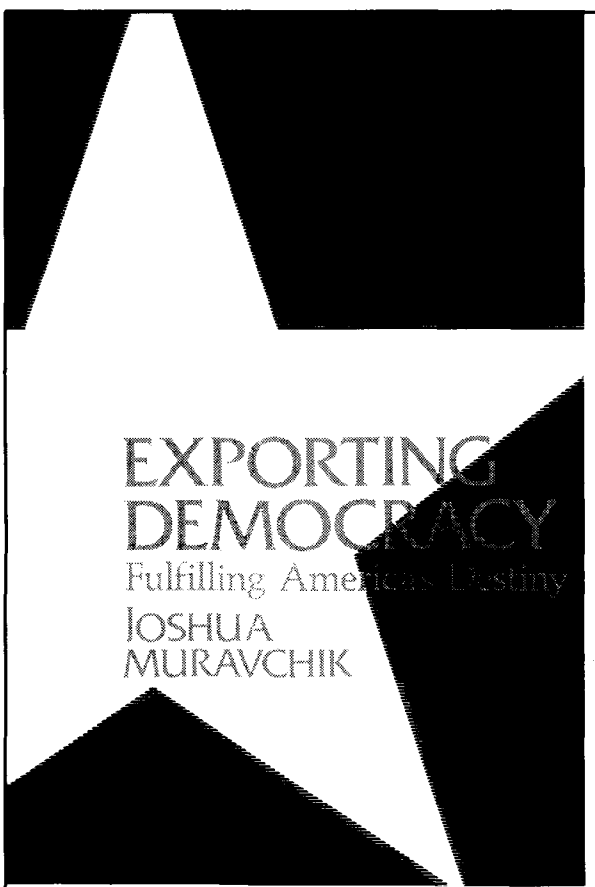
Mere fact has nothing to do with Ben Flesh's transmutation of "work" into "romance," just as Bobbo Druff's awareness of his ruined body, which however clothed looks "as if it had taken a direct hit," has nothing to do with his persistent buying of Brooks Brothers suits.

That Elkin's comedy is hedged around by darkness is quite apparent. Ben Flesh, like Elkin himself, is a victim of multiple sclerosis, and Bobbo Druff's medical problems make it terribly hard for him to rise to the challenge of his own MacGuffin, one of the "holy tremors, sacred seizures" that for a time deflect "the long, arduous order of death." The creations of human language are anything but everlasting, no doubt because they're so much more interesting than eternity promises to be. To "go behind gravity's back," as Flesh urges, takes full account of both meanings of "gravity." The heart of Druff's MacGuffin is the tendency of everything that he encounters to point back to his seemingly weightless and possibly murderous son; and behind this, we finally learn, lies a kind of primal scene that made Mikey much of what he now is, the appalling moment when, as a child of ten, he had to endure an emotionally crippling, self-comforting avowal of love from a father who expected to die then and there.

This remembered event, the climax of *The MacGuffin*, is one of the most knowing and affecting treatments of the parent-child relationship that I can recall. But it will not do simply to claim that the inner "seriousness" of comedy is what validates it as art. Comedy and dark seriousness like Elkin's are parts of a more complex texture of feelings about what it is like to live in the here and now, and Elkin's whole representation of the American here and now is what most deserves praise.

The Chamber of Commerce of Druff's city likes to call the place "The Nation's Threshold," and for years Elkin has been inviting us to look differently at what can be seen across such a threshold. Druff himself is continually confronted by a new America, where 4:00 a.m. traffic looks like rush hour (the effect of a service economy, his driver explains—nurses and bakers and pizza deliverers and fast-food servers never sleep), where he sees "people walking around in malls, wearing the styles and noshing on foreign finger foods," where safe sex and hypothermia are major preoccupations. And Druff responds to newness in a way that any practical politician can be trusted to do. In one of his presidential reveries he imagines himself convening a new constitutional convention

> . . . to see if after two hundred and some years since its founding we can't put together some new laws that might actually *mean* something to the man in the street. We will, and right in front of the gaze of an interested world, now turn our attention to those areas of governance which have been too long neglected. For this purpose I will, and in the not-too-distant, be naming a blue-ribbon committee to consider subjects such as Used Car Law, Points and Closing Law, Improper Credit Card Charges Law, Bank Statement Error and Utilities Bills Law, and the Rules of Guarantee, Warranty, and 7/70,000. In addition, a special Presidential Oversight Commission will be addressing everything ever written into a lease pertain-



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ing to the payment of the last month's rent in advance—Rent Deposit Law. Because, well, to tell you the truth, my people, you don't all that many of you look like Virginia gent farmers and country-fed, all-purpose Jeffersonian aristoi to me, or even, when it comes right down, artisans and mechanics either. Good night and God bless.

In fact we don't most of us look like the Founding Fathers, and a nation reinvented along Bobbo Druff's lines might well be nicer for most of us to live in. Be that as it may, Stanley Elkin clearly has just about all of us in mind, and the loving generosity of his wonder at things as they are, and as they might become, is as essentially American as anything in Emerson or Whitman. We owe him thanks again.

THOMAS R. EDWARDS teaches at Rutgers and is an editor of *Raritan*. His new book, *Over Here: Criticizing America 1968-1989* (Rutgers University Press), will appear in September.

Writing On

BY MICHAEL GORRA

Paul Scott: A Life of the Author of *The Raj Quartet* by Hilary Spurling

(W. W. Norton, 448 pp., $24.95)

The Chindits were supplied by air from Imphal. Plane after plane flew out of India, across the Irrawaddy, and on into Burma, dropping jeeps, ammunition, and even live "chickens with legs tightly bound" down to British and Indian units behind the Japanese lines. At the far end of that chain of supply was a young Gurkha officer named John Masters, whose family had served in India since 1805. With the heavy casualties of the Chindits' guerrilla war he had risen so fast that his actual rank of major was meaningless, and he was known only as the Commandant. At 30 he was second-in-command of a division, but when India gained its independence he left the army and moved to America.

On the other end was an Emergency Commissioned Officer named Paul Scott. As Hilary Spurling writes in this splendid biography, Scott "knew virtually nothing about India, hadn't wanted to go there, and was not initially impressed by what he found." His background was all wrong for British India. He was from an intensely respectable North London suburb, where his father earned a decent living as a commercial artist, drawing each season's new clothes in the age before fashion photography. But one aunt was a domestic servant, and Scott had left school at 14. He started the war in the ranks, and his hopes for a commission were delayed for more than a year by his victimization in a homosexual incident in which "there had been an element of blackmail." Once in India, Scott was assigned to what the Indian army contemptuously called the "Rice Corps," and went to work organizing the parachute drops on which Masters and his troops depended.

Both men became novelists. Success as a writer came as easily to Masters as it had in the army. Best sellers such as *Nightrunners of Bengal* and *Bhowani Junction* offered fast-paced and undemanding stories, with more sex and violence than Kipling and a straightforward paternalism unmarked by the liberal guilt of Forster. At the literary agency where Scott worked throughout the 1950s, Masters was too important a client for a junior member of the firm to handle.

Masters got an absorbing war memoir, *The Road to Mandalay*, out of the Burma campaign. Scott got from it a mediocre but unformulaic first novel about the business of air supply called *Johnnie Sahib* (1952), a story of how two very different British officers compete for the loyalty, and hence the efficiency, of their Indian troops. It did reasonably well, but no breakthrough book followed; and Scott soon passed the point at which he could be described as "promising." After fifteen years and eight novels he seemed doomed to midlist obscurity and an increasing desperation about money. Then his publishers made an act of faith and paid for a trip to India, his first since the war. And when he came back, Spurling writes, he turned "defeat into victory," like the British in Burma: he wrote *The Jewel in the Crown*. It appeared in 1966, the first volume of a tetralogy about the end of British rule in India that stands as our most comprehensive fictional account of Britain's imperial engagement.

The contrast with Masters is useful, because it suggests Scott's own marginality in the world about which he wrote. Reading *The Raj Quartet* after its completion, Scott's friend and the popular novelist and military memsahib M. M. Kaye felt that she could have steered him right on any number of points. There was no way, she felt, "given the integrity and efficiency of the Indian Police," that someone like Ronald Merrick, the repressed homosexual policeman in Scott's novels, could have gotten away with abusing his prisoners. (I write not long after the release of the Birmingham Six, when such a faith in British justice seems more than a bit complacent; it's really a complaint that Scott was not—well, *pukka*.) Other readers, whose Indian service had given them a wider experience than Kaye's, found his portrait of "the brutality, complacency, self-righteousness, and rigidity of the Raj" so accurate that they thought "Paul Scott" must be an ex-colleague's pseudonym.

About India, Scott admitted, he was merely a "professional imposter." Or was he? Scott liked to say that the cotton mills of Lancashire, now dilapidated, were as much a monument to the British empire as any statue of Queen Victoria; that the possession of India had "helped nourish the flesh, warm the blood" of every insular Englishman. He could map the subcontinent onto England, ironically describing the social demarcations of his North London suburb as if it were an Indian cantonment, the working class area as Black Town. For Scott knew, more than any other writer of his time, how British national identity, not only abroad but at home, was bound up with the facts of empire. Orwell had hinted at it. *The Raj Quartet*'s account of how "the British came to the end of themselves as they were" made it a commonplace.

Postcolonial critics now look at the history of the British in India as the history of British representations of India. Scott antedates them. "For at least a hundred years," Guy Perron writes in the *Quartet*'s last volume, *A Division of the Spoils* (1975),

> India has formed part of England's idea about herself and for the same period India has been forced into a position of being a reflection of that idea. . . . [But] our idea about ourselves will now not accommodate any idea about India except the idea of returning it to the Indians in order to prove that we are English and have demonstrably English ideas.

And Scott argued in an essay that India was the mausoleum for Britain's "last two great senses of public duty": the duty, once the British took possession of India, to govern it responsibly and well; and the duty to hand its government

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over to the Indians themselves because "to get rid of it was the liberal human thing to do." In literary terms, the first corresponds to Kipling and the second to Forster. But each writer sees only half his subject, and their synthesis had to wait until the empire was gone. The great English novel about imperialism had to wait for a writer who did not have simply to defend or to attack it, but who could instead show how those two duties came inevitably into conflict. For the attempt to display those "demonstrably English ideas" led to an abdication of responsibility shaped "by the indifference and ignorance of the English at home"; to a conflict in which, as Perron writes, "India itself, as itself, that is to say India as not part of our idea of ourselves . . . played no part whatsoever." And so the enormous balls-up of the devolution of power: British liberalism's share of responsibility for the communal massacres and the continuing legacies of the Partition between India and Pakistan.

Spurling writes that Scott became a "formidably knowledgeable Imperial historian." One of the *Quartet*'s greatest strengths is its tragic historical imagination, its image of a slaughter created by the Raj but from which the British were themselves exempt and extraneous. It's one of Spurling's few weaknesses that she says little about Scott's reading. She does mention a review of Penderel Moon's *Divide and Quit*, and Moon's account of the moment-by-moment choices that he faced in 1947 as revenue minister in the princely state of Bahawalpur is indeed echoed in the way that Scott's characters find historical necessity developing out of the contingencies of particular decisions. But I would like to know more. I would like to know if his interpretation of the Raj is as original as it seems; to know if, as Max Beloff has suggested, Scott's work has a richness that no historical account has yet achieved.

Scott's anti-nostalgic sense of history was not immediately popular—not, indeed, until Granada Television's 1983 production had straightened out and simplified *The Raj Quartet*'s manifold layering of narrative on narrative, its awareness of the fictiveness of historical interpretation, its intricate and rather Faulknerian sense of the way in which the past is not ever really past, "As if time were telescoped and space dovetailed . . . so that at once past, present, and future were contained in your cupped palm." That slow and meditative style created obstacles enough to the *Quartet*'s popularity; but Scott's work faced political difficulties as well.

On the one hand, Spurling writes, "embarrassed British Council representatives [dissociated] themselves . . . from the *Quartet*'s 'anti-British stance.' " And on the other, the seriousness with which he took his characters offended critics who thought that Forster had the last word and dismissed the Raj and its servants "as intrinsically malevolent or absurd." Some of that remains, in the dissatisfaction that many critics from the subcontinent feel with Scott's concentration on the British in India rather than India itself. Salman Rushdie, for example, wrote that Scott makes Indians "bit players in their own history." But would he rather that an Englishman created an Indian protagonist? I don't think so; and in any case Rushdie missed the way in which the *Quartet* is itself a criticism of the Orientalism that he claims to find in it.

Scott himself said that the end of the Raj was "the metaphor I have presently chosen to illustrate my view of life." But why this metaphor? The fact that he spent his mid-20s in India doesn't seem quite sufficient, and Spurling writes that Scott's "lifelong commitment to the subcontinent was the first but by no means the last, and certainly not the hardest of the puzzles he set for a biographer." It is, to put it crudely, a question of the necessary connection between a writer's subject and his sensibility. Reading *The Raj Quartet*, I have often had the sense of a puzzle, of a missing fragment that, if only I could find it, would make the work seem all of a piece. At times it simply seemed that Scott had too many gifts: no only a historian's grand vision, a Tolstoy an awareness of the world's indifference to individual human life; but also a sense of the deep unhappiness of private experience, of the barriers that silence and pride create between people who love one another. Both were superb, but what was the connection between them? Scott's frequent appeals to Emerson's essay on history, which explores a hidden identity between history and biography didn't seem enough.

Perhaps this is unfair. It's not a question that one asks of writers who don't have a great subject, whose work seems more entirely private. Or, conversely, of those political novels that seem merely public in their implications. But with Scott one asks it just the same. I suspect that the clue lies in the police officer Ronald Merrick—the only character to play a significant role in all four volumes and the only major character whose point of view Scott never allows himself to enter. To the *Quartet*'s heroine, Sarah Layton, Merrick is:

> . . . our dark side, the arcane side. You reveal something that is sad about us, as if out here we had built a mansion without doors and windows, with no way in and no way out. All India lies on our doorstep and cannot enter to warm us or be warmed. . . . We live in holes and crevices of the crumbling stone, no longer sheltered by the carapace of our history which is leaving us behind. And one day we shall lie exposed, in our tender skins. You, as well as us.

He is a dazzling darkness visible. Coming from a lower-middle-class background rather like Scott's, Merrick sees India as a chance to climb. And while he believes in the white man's right to rule Merrick doesn't match it with a belief in duty, in the civilizing mission of the British calls the "situation," that is, in the contempt of the strong for the weak on which imperialism depends. It is "the prime human emotion," contempt. And white liberals are as contemptuous of the way that Westernized Indians provide a "black reflection of their own white ideals" as "arrogant upper-class reactionar[ies]" are of the soldiers and servants whose much-praised "bravery and loyalty" is a mark of their inferior status. "Even when you congratulated him you had contempt for him," Merrick says and he adds that only envy comes close to matching its power.

Those words give the lie to the British belief in duty as an originating force of empire—and yet they leave that duty to be discharged just the same. And Scott connects that dark clarity about the nature of power to Merrick's

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sexuality. Merrick describes the "situation" while interrogating the Anglicized Hari Kumar—an interrogation during which, Kumar says, "He had his hand between my legs," and that finishes with Merrick smearing blood across Kumar's genitals. For Merrick has so repressed his own homosexuality that it can emerge only as a sadism sanctioned by his official position. Scott's character Dimitri Bronowsky, himself homosexual, speculates after Merrick's death that the policer man's sexuality, his attraction to Indian men, is so completely bound up with "his sense of social inferiority and the grinding defensive belief in his own racial superiority" that accepting it would have meant "discarding every belief he had." And so that crumbling closet, "that mansion without doors and windows," in which one hides behind one's prejudices from the things one cannot face, as the British trying to discharge their duty cannot admit the foundation of contempt on which their power rests.

Scott's analysis of the repressed homoeroticism of empire provides yet another example of the ways his work anticipates the currently fashionable buzzings of the academy. He was drawn throughout his career to marginal figures: to Eurasians trying to pass as white in his early novels; and in the *Quartet* to the superfluous, discarded missionary Barbie Batchelor, or to the object of Merrick's hatred, Hari Kumar, "an English boy with a dark brown skin. The combination is hopeless." Merrick is but the last, and the most complexly drawn, of such characters. You pity him for his self-loathing even as you shrink away from him.

Spurling's great achievement, then, lies in the way she exposes the biographical roots of that interest in the relation between marginality and power. She provides the missing piece in a way that makes it possible to see what was closeted in *The Raj Quartet* all along, by showing the role that sexual identity played in Scott's life. Her research took her on a hunch "to Tasmania to visit an old friend of [Scott's], who had known him as a very young writer" in the late 1930s. That visit "clarified much that had seemed inexplicable," for it confirmed that as a young man Scott had had a homosexual period. He had been introduced to the world of art through an affair with an older man, and had taken *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* as the bright book of life. But soon after joining the army he got caught and was threatened with exposure. The details remain unclear; but throughout Scott's fiction there appears again and again an account of "the punitive connection between an obsessive authoritarian officer and the youth he selects as his victim."

But exposure never came; and as if in relief, Scott soon after married. "He read Oscar Wilde," Scott's friend told Spurling, "and decided to control his impulses." When he returned from India after the war he and his wife, Penny, had two children quickly, and he went to work as a literary agent while his own career got slowly under way. Spurling says little about Scott's sexual life in marriage, though she leaves no doubt that he loved and needed his wife. What is clear is that Scott never told her about his homosexual experiences. He was "a prince among agents," charming and generous to his friends, and a compelling teacher at the University of Tulsa in the last years of his life. But his family saw little of that. He could not express his emotions except on paper, and he retreated instead into a world of silence, work, and gin, punctuated only by blackouts and rage. One night he slashed the throat of his own portrait.

And the work went nowhere. There was a muddiness at its center, a "rhetorical cloudiness" that Spurling argues masked an inability "to confront his sexual nature in fiction." Meanwhile he increasingly began to suffer from an old and undiagnosed complaint. In India Scott had picked up a blood infection called amoebiasis, whose effects included "lassitude, low fevers, dejection, and paralysis of the will." He makes a doctor wonder aloud, in *A Division of the Spoils*, about the historical effects on the Raj of the "depressive and obsessive behavior" that the disease produces.

How much effect did the disease have on him? Did it cause, or merely exacerbate, his darkness? Such questions cannot be answered. What is clear is that after his return to India in 1964, Scott underwent a successful cure, and immediately began to write *The Jewel in the Crown*. He built himself a mansion in his mind, one whose foundations were laid on seventy cigarettes and a bottle a day; a safe place in which to face his own darkness, to find public terms for his private pain. Still, even there he couldn't accept the challenge of opening the closet door on Merrick's consciousness. And he stayed there for the dozen years it took him to write *The Raj Quartet* and its pendant, *Staying On* (1977). A daughter's suicide attempts, his wife's increasing misery: none of it brought him out.

When, in the spring of 1977, he read his wife's statement in her petition for divorce, Scott said to his daughter, "But if this is true, I must have been a monster. You must have been afraid of me." And he looked "up mildly over his reading glasses, quizzical, gentle, genuinely perplexed." By that time, however, his work was done. News that *Staying On* had won the Booker Prize came to him when he was in an Oklahoma hospital, newly diagnosed with colon cancer. That brought him the recognition that the *The Raj Quartet* had not received when its separate volumes were published. When he came back to England to die, his wife "felt that the slate was wiped clean between them," and she returned for a few last months of peace, "united, unexpectedly joyful," before his death in March 1978.

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BROOKINGS

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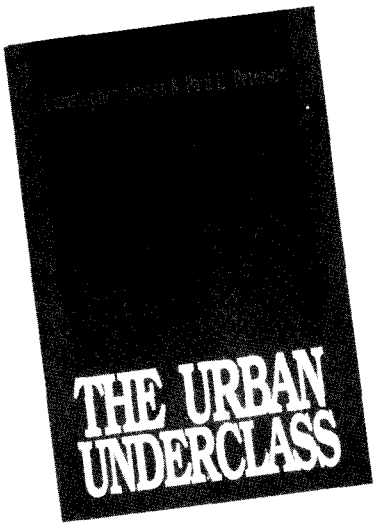

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Spurling treats her discoveries with the sort of tact whose light touch does not force interpretation beyond the bounds of common sense. More could be done—and no doubt will, since she offers just enough commentary on the fiction for one to see the biographical impetus behind it. And she tells a good story herself. Scott's life must have been a difficult one for a biographer to describe, and not only because of his reticence. For its surface seems so unmarked by event, so featureless, that anything resembling a chronicle would have been dull and pointless; and so in places Spurling collapses months and even years into an essayistic portrait of the tenor of his life at one period or another. The end has all the drama one could wish for, a sense of achievement won against great odds and through enormous pain to himself and to others.

I think of an image from *The Jewel in the Crown* that sums up so much of what Scott's great tetralogy offers, "the sight of old Miss Crane sitting in the pouring rain by the roadside holding the hand of a dead Indian." She is a superintendent of mission schools, and the dead man is one of her teachers. He's died because as they drove toward a line of rioters during the Quit India demonstrations of 1942, she didn't trust his instructions to speed up and crash through. Instead she stopped, trusted to the heaven's command of the Raj to see them safely home. She is spared, the teacher is not. He's beaten to death because he's with her, an Englishwoman; because the British can no longer protect those whom it is their self-appointed mission to protect. Miss Crane cannot protect her subordinate because her very presence is what makes him vulnerable in the first place. The imperial mission cancels itself out, dies of its own contradictions. For not only can the British no longer preserve the order they take as a justification for their rule, but they are themselves responsible for its destruction. Moments like that ensure that *The Raj Quartet* will stand as the greatest work of fiction the British produced about their empire.

MICHAEL GORRA teaches English at Smith College. He is the author of *The English Novel at Mid-Century* (St. Martin's).

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 5*

pose himself to them in Miami.

Oliver Stone's recent movie is a shallow portrayal that erroneously assumes the general public can digest nothing deeper than stereotypes.

RANDY OLSON
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

TRB *continued from page 8*

nois, who has taken this up as a cause. Although PC hysterics—correctly—mock excessive concern about "sensitivity" as a threat to robust debate, many of their own complaints amount to offended sensitivity at someone else's overrobust exercise of free expression.

Phrases like "accused" and "ran into trouble" often turn out to mean that someone was yelled at, or picketed, or vilified in the student newspaper. How is that censorship? How is it censorship if the students and faculty choose not to have a conservative commencement speaker? Or if some lunatic puts out a memo condemning the phrase "a nip in the air"? The complainers like to observe that minority students are being taught to revel in their status as victims, to wallow in "sensitivity," and to demand exemption from criticism. But much of the "PC" criticism itself reflects the romance of victimization and false martyrdom.

Then there are the so-called speech codes: official university rules designed to protect sensitivity and promote civility. Hyde, backed by the ACLU, is pushing a bill to curtail these codes by applying First Amendment free-speech standards to private universities (as they already apply to public ones). There are some genuine horrors here, such as the already legendary rule against "inappropriately directed laughter," and the one attempting to outlaw "conspicuous exclusions of others from conversations." But there is also a lot of exaggeration.

The statistic that 70 percent of American universities have speech codes of some sort, based on a survey, has now taken on a life of its own. It is grossly misleading. Most of the rules in these codes don't infringe First Amendment values in any way. In fact, they are intended to *promote* First Amendment values. The prototypical "speech code" rule would be one forbidding the shouting down of another speaker.

Many of these codes, as it happens, have their roots in the early 1970s, when they were a *conservative* response to left-wing student activism. In those ancient days, it was academic conservatives who argued that the life of the mind required a higher standard of civility and respect for the views of others than could be tolerated in society at large, and insisted that students who could not agree to such a standard did not belong in the academic community. Now Brown throws out a drunk for yelling racist and homophobic slogans in the middle of the night, and conservatives scream totalitarianism. Next they'll be occupying the dean's office.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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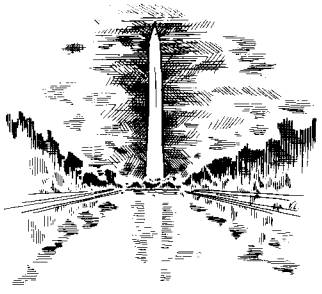
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Scandal time

WELL, THINGS ARE BACK TO NORmal in what we mood-of-Washington columnists are professionally obligated to call "this town," and everybody is much relieved. For a couple of years there, what with Gorby hogging page one, the cold war dwindling, the only events of interest happening half a world away in the former East bloc, etc., it looked as if Washington might be reduced to occupying itself with such unrewarding matters as the declining economy, the desperate underclass, and the disastrous health care system. The Gulf war provided a spectacular break from this distressing prospect, restoring the policy elites' sense of self-importance and giving rise to an invigorating we're-No.-1 spirit. But the post-victory high abruptly Kurdled. A dismal fog of a future—a ghastly miasma of squabbling about educational reform and writing Paul Tsongas profiles—loomed before us, threatening a massive epidemic of chronic fatigue syndrome. Then, all of a sudden, like a shaft of springtime sunshine, help broke through, and our fair city was bathed in the unexpected yet reassuringly familiar glow of scandal.

KITTY "KILLER" KELLEY, NANCY "Hairdo with a Hairbrush" Reagan, John "Smilin' Jack" Sununu, Chuck "Mr. Virginia" Robb, Alfonse "The Grifter" d'Amato, Ted "The Trouser" Kennedy, Max "All the Names That Fit We Print" Frankel—never has a motlier posse ridden to the rescue. Where to begin? Kitty and Nancy? Fine.

ACCORDING TO KITTY, WHOSE book I have been listening to on cassette in the car (her voice is as sweetly innocent as a schoolgirl's), Nancy not only recycled teddy bears and pistol-whipped her daughter with a hairbrush, she also talked her husband into overruling his secretary of defense, half his national security apparatus, and the whole of the conservative movement to sign an arms deal with Gorbachev and, in general, make nice with the evil empire. Kitty also tells the story of how Nancy finagled her first date with Ronnie by insisting that the then president of the Screen Actors Guild take her out to dinner to reassure her that she would not be blacklisted on account of being mistaken for another actress of the time, also called Nancy Davis, who was a frequent attendee of meetings of Hollywood's many Communist front groups. Andrew Cockburn, the British journalist and Soviet expert, has deduced the connection between these two sets of events. Cockburn's theory, he tells me, is that the Kremlin pulled off a bait-and-switch operation. The Nancy Davis who had dinner with Reagan at LaRue's restaurant on Sunset Strip that night was—how obvious it suddenly seems!—the other one. She seduced him, married him, duped him into changing his politics (a "conservative" would arouse fewer suspicions), maneuvered him into the White House—and then delivered the goods for her Moscow masters. The Cockburn theory clears up a myriad of mysteries, from Nancy's passion for red dresses to her invented personal history, which is so shot through with fabrications that, as Kitty writes, "Only two entries are true on Nancy's birth certificate: her sex and her color." Nancy's KGB controller from day one was, of course, that former stalwart of the Hollywood left and star of *The Manchurian Candidate,* Colonel Frank Sinatra. No wonder those "lunches" were strictly "private."



VIRGINIA IS NOT FOR LOVERS, as Chuck Robb is learning. NBC titillated viewers last Sunday with the news that the former governor, now senator, once got a massage, and possibly more, from a former Miss Virginia-USA in a room at the Hotel Pierre. Four years ago, when Gary Hart was politically obliterated by a similar revelation, I predicted that in the future politicians could forget about any hope that their privacy might be minimally respected. The Hart defenestration was accompanied by all sorts of sanctimonious assurances that his was a special case. After all, he'd dared the press to put a tail on him, hadn't he? And what was all right for a senator wasn't all right for a presidential candidate. And anyway, the issue wasn't sex, which is private, it was "judgment" and "character," which are public. As I pointed out at the time, this was nonsense. If a politician with as ample a public record as Hart's (or Robb's) is a congenital liar or a reckless risk-taker, then these flaws will be manifest, or at least discernible, in that public record. Traducing his privacy is therefore redundant as well as offensive. In the Robb case, the eyewash about judgment, etc., has been dispensed with. Neither NBC nor *The Washington Post,* which rushed into print with its own salacious story, bothered to offer any arguments that Robb's private behavior had any bearing on his performance of his public duties. In the post-Hart era, the only issue, apparently, is the one raised, Paul Taylor-like, by Tom Brokaw in his interview with Miss Virginia: "Did Governor Robb commit adultery?"

ONLY ONE OF THE CURRENT SPATE of scandals is not trivial. I refer to the possibility—it is only that, so far—that representatives of the 1980 Reagan campaign made a deal, or attempted to make a deal, to delay the release of the fifty-two Americans then held hostage by Iran until after the election. I have been trying to figure out why, as is the unanimous Beltway opinion, this story is going nowhere. I think it must be because of the sheer enormity of its implications. Moorehead Kennedy, one of the former hostages, who believes the story, pointed out on CNN last Saturday that under well-established American case law the makers of such a deal would be as guilty of kidnapping as the hostage-holders themselves. But it's worse than that. If the tale is true, it would mean that an American presidential election was stolen by an act of treason. If George Bush was involved, as seems unlikely to the point of absurdity, he would of course have to be impeached, since a higher crime or misdemeanor can scarcely be imagined. But even if the only culprit was William Casey—assuming, again, that the deed was done—the magnitude of the iniquity would dwarf all the other scandals of American political history combined. The exposure of the vulnerability of American democracy would be horribly painful, and the pain would be made worse by the fact that there is no way the wrong could be righted. The post-Watergate consolation—"the system works"—would not be available this time. No wonder there is so little appetite for a real investigation. On the other hand, maybe the explanation for the inertness of this particular scandal is simpler. Maybe the problem is that no one has come up with a sufficiently catchy moniker for it. October Surprise is illogical, since the purpose of the alleged caper was to avoid a surprise, not to spring one. Garygate? Caseycase? Spanish Fly? Ritzoff? Bushwhack? No, they won't do. Better suggestions should be forwarded to me at this office.

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